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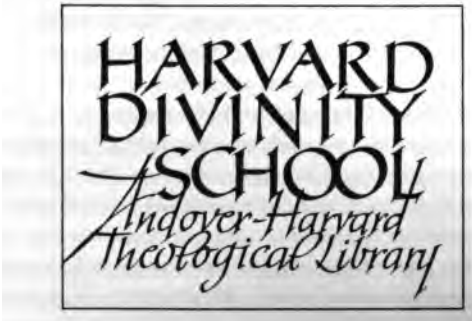
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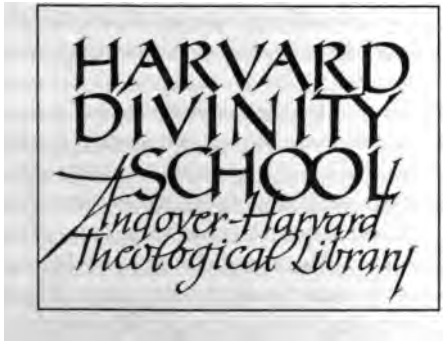
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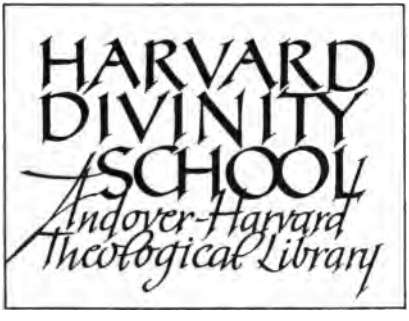
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This volume of Mr. Ware's Works contains his sermons on the Character and Offices of Christ, which were originally published by himself in a separate volume; a selection from his sermons preached at Ordinations; two Historical Discourses at the completion of the first century of the New Brick Church; a Farewell Address to the members of the Second Church and Society; his work on the Formation of the Christian Character; and his Sequel to the same, left unfinished at the time of his death.

C. R.

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SERMONS.

SERMON I.

CHRIST THE FOUNDATION.

1 CORINTHIANS III. 11.

FOR OTHER FOUNDATION CAN NO MAN LAY THAN THAT IS LAID, WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST.

In the preceding verses, the apostle has been speaking of the divisions which prevailed in the Corinthian church, and which had arisen from their unchristian devotion to particular teachers. He rebukes them for separating into different parties, under different heads, one of Paul, another of Cephas, and another of Apollos. He reminds them that these men are not to be regarded as heads of the church, but as ministers in it. "Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers *by* whom ye believed;" not *in* whom. "The one planted, the other watered; but he that planted and he that watered are one;" — engaged in one work, pursuing one end, serving one Master, and therefore not to be set up against one another by their followers, and made occasion of contention. "We are laborers together with God" for your salvation. "Ye are God's husbandry;" it is our business to watch and cherish the plants. "Ye are God's building;" it is our business to toil in its erection, and complete it a holy temple unto the Lord. "I have laid the

foundation, and another has built upon it. But let every man take heed how he builds thereon; for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ;" and do ye be careful that ye regard not us, nor contend concerning us, as if we were ourselves the foundation.

The caution which the apostle thus administers to the Corinthian church has not ceased to be important; and if we would be saved from the folly and ruin of neglecting it, it will become us to consider diligently *of what, and in what sense,* Jesus Christ is the foundation. This will be the object of the present discourse.

1. Jesus is the foundation of *the church.* It is built upon him as the chief corner-stone. This figure is not uncommon with the writers of the New Testament. In more than one instance they speak of the church, or the company of believers, as a temple, each believer one of the stones of which it is formed, and Jesus himself the foundation, or corner-stone. Agreeably to this idea, Jesus is represented in our text as the only foundation on which the church can stand, and in which believers should trust.

The church is that society or collection of the good, who have been brought home to God, and been fitted for heaven, through the instrumentality of the dispensations of grace upon earth. It is a permanent body, existing alike in all ages. It is one body, though of many members. It must, then, have some common head, and common bond of union; and that is Christ. The members are united in him as the branches in the vine, and draw nourishment and support from one stock. If there be any other head, bond of union, source of nourishment and strength, it ceases to be the church; and those individual members who abide not in him, are like branches severed from the vine, "cast forth and withered." Without him they can do nothing. They

can find neither life, nor light, nor support, nor the power to bring forth fruit.

The believers at Corinth seem not sufficiently to have considered this; and hence the apostle rebukes them as carnal. Instead of being satisfied with the authority of Christ, they separated from him and from one another in an unwise contention concerning the superiority of favorite teachers, whom they thoughtlessly exalted to be their masters, although admonished that "one only was their Master." The reprimand of the apostle is here recorded as a warning to all who should afterwards believe. Yet by how many has it been unheeded! Every age has witnessed other men, and fallible men, set up at the head of the corner, instead of that elect and precious One whom God appointed. As the Samaritans erected a temple on Mount Gerizim in opposition to that at Jerusalem, so the sects in Christendom have often erected some authority in preference to that of Christ. There is still too much of this. "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas," is still a cry too frequently heard. Faith is yet established on the speculations of fallible men, and the salvation of the soul rested on the teaching of human wisdom.

This is an error frequently and pointedly censured by Jesus and his apostles. It is virtually, though not professedly, a renunciation of his authority, a rejection of his rule, a rebellion against his government. The man who surrenders his judgment to the dictation of other men, instead of appealing to the written word of Christ's instruction, and the church which fetters itself by articles drawn up in language which man's wisdom teaches, instead of walking in the wide liberty of the charter of God's truth, have laid another foundation than that which is laid, and are obnoxious to heavy rebuke.

2. In the next place, Christ is the only foundation, because *the Christian religion rests on his authority.* He is its prime and only sufficient Teacher. The religion is to be learned from him, and to his word the final appeal must be made. No representations of what it is, or of what it teaches, are to be trusted, except so far as they are perceived to be conformable to his own, as uttered in his life, and recorded by his evangelists, or illustrated by his apostles.

The wisdom of man is an uncertain and insufficient guide. For Christianity is not something to be discovered by us, but is a revelation from heaven, sent for our acceptance, concerning which we have nothing to do, but to study and receive it. It affords no scope for invention or discovery. We may not add to it, nor take from it. We may speculate concerning it, but may not affix our speculations as a part of it. And if we receive the alterations or additions, which are found in the traditions of the church or the books of its teachers, we may be sure that we receive error. For the greatest corruption in doctrine and morals prevailed when the teachers had hidden the Bible, and set up tradition and authority in its stead; when they placed themselves in the seat of Jesus, and men obeyed them instead of him. In this way, the true light, which ought always to have been set like a city on a hill, was hidden, as it were, under a bushel, and an almost pagan darkness overshadowed the world — a darkness visible and heavy — a darkness that was "felt" — which was scattered only by uncovering the light of God's holy Word, and restoring the forgotten ascendency of Jesus Christ.

The teaching of Jesus must be regarded as the fountain of Christian truth. The instructions of others are but streams flowing from it; some nearer the source, and some

more distant from it, but all likely to be more or less affected by the character of the channel which conveys them, and the soil through which they pass. Even the words of the apostles are not to be taken before those of Christ; for to them the Spirit was given by measure, to him "without measure." The treasure in them was in "earthen vessels," and they "knew but in part." The Spirit preserved them from injurious errors in communicating and recording the truth; but still they are not to be put on a level with their infallible Master, nor their epistles to be esteemed and admired beyond his discourses. They wrote for particular churches, on special occasions, oftentimes on subjects of temporary interest and questions of controversy, now settled and forgotten; and this it is which makes some passages in their writings so hard to be understood. Jesus, on the other hand, though adapting himself to present circumstances, yet had in general a wider reference to all who should in any age believe on him. He was laying the foundation of a temple for all people, while the disciples were building upon it for particular communities. Hence he is more easily and generally understood, and his teaching is more universally applicable. Not that the epistles are to be in any degree undervalued; for there are large portions of them still of universal and most important application. I only mean, we are to bear it in mind that he is the Master of the apostles, no less than of ourselves; and that we are safest in deriving the first principles of our faith from his own lips and life, and then interpreting the apostles accordingly. And this is our duty; not only because, as I said, he is our Master, and not they, but because, also, a great part of the perplexing and unhappy consequences arising from unintelligible and superstitious doctrine, and from misapprehension of Scripture, have sprung from this

very source — the leaning on the apostles, instead of on Jesus; the learning Christianity from their obscure discussions of particular questions at Rome, or Corinth, or Galatia, instead of taking it from the plain exposition of their Master, who spoke for the edification of all men, in all ages, and under all circumstances. We shall avoid a great evil by going directly to him, first of all. We are, indeed, to build "on the foundation of the prophets and the apostles;" but let no man forget that Christ is the "chief cornerstone," and that it is in *him** that "the building, being fitly framed together, is enabled to become a holy temple, acceptable to God."

3. Again, Jesus Christ may be considered as the foundation, because to believe in him as the predicted Messiah is the *fundamental article of the Christian faith.* This is important to be remarked, because it presents an answer to an inquiry often made, in which all are interested — "What doctrine is to be regarded as truly fundamental and essential?" The manner in which our text is worded fairly suggests a reply.

The term *Christ*, as is well known, is not the name of the person, but the title of office. It indicates the station or character, and is equivalent to the *Messiah*, or the *Anointed.* The proper name of our Lord's person is *Jesus;* by which he is designated throughout the evangelists. The official title, *Christ*, did not become a proper name until after the resurrection; for until then the great undecided question among his countrymen was, whether he were truly the Christ or not. It was the belief that he was so which distinguished his disciples from the other Jews, and they accordingly called him Jesus, the Christ — the Mes-

* Eph. ii. 21. The pronoun in the original is in the singular number — *ἐν ᾧ*.

siah — the Anointed; from which use it readily passed into a name, as in our text, and throughout the epistles.

The primary importance of this article of faith, thus demonstrated by its becoming inseparably associated with the very name of the Savior, points it out to us as the fundamental article of the Christian's belief. All the other truths and doctrines of the Christian system grow out of this and rest upon it. Upon this depend the authority of the Master and the allegiance of the disciples. While this stands, these remain. If this be removed, they fall.

A slight glance at the history of the New Testament confirms this position. The Messiah had been predicted by many of the prophets, and his coming was anxiously awaited by the Jewish people. At the time of our Lord's appearance, the expectation had become general and impatient. Men thronged around him, "musing in their hearts whether this were the Christ or not." The chief people sent messengers to inquire, and they put the question to himself — "Tell us plainly, art thou the Christ?" This was the great controversy between the believers and the Jews. Upon the decision of this depended the whole question of his authority and claims. Those who admitted it followed and obeyed him. Those who denied it crucified and rejected him. Throughout the book of the Acts, therefore, we find that it is this which was the burden of the apostles' preaching. "God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ." "Proving from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ." "This Jesus, whom I preach to you, is the Christ." To establish this, was the object which they had at heart. To establish this, they labored, and reasoned, and entreated. For they knew that when this should be granted, all else would follow of course. When they should have persuaded men to acknowledge him

as the Messiah, they knew that his instructions must be received as the message of God, and his religion stand and prevail by its divine light and power. Consequently, we find drawn up by them no authoritative list of essential articles, no precise and dogmatical creeds, "which, except a man keep whole and undefiled, he shall without doubt perish everlastingly." * No; these were the inventions of weaker men in more ignorant times, who cared more for their own and less for their Master's influence. The apostles were satisfied to proclaim *this* as the one essential article, the distinguishing principle of the Christian, on the reception of which a man should be numbered among the believers. They preached to men JESUS THE CHRIST. They declared what he had done and taught, and left them to derive his system from his own life and instructions, labors and sacrifices — aiding them, to be sure, by their reasonings and illustrations; but at the same time declaring, "We have no dominion over your faith." Would to God that all teachers had been as modest and consistent! Would to God that all Christians would understand and abide by the liberty thus allowed them; acknowledging no foundation but this, Jesus the Christ, and taking heed "how they build thereon."

4. We are likewise to regard Jesus Christ as the foundation, because he is *the source of all satisfactory religious knowledge.*

Jesus called himself "the Light of the world;" and he is truly the fountain and depository of whatever light we possess on the great subject of religion. There is to us, strictly and properly speaking, no other. We know nothing on the subject, clearly and certainly, but what we learn

* The language of the *Athanasian Creed.*

from him, or have been enabled to attain in consequence of what he has taught us. It is true that we gather something of the existence, attributes, and providence of God from the works of nature; but how little should we be able to do it, without the aid of revelation! We find the great principles of morality and accountableness in "the law written on our hearts;" but it is our previous acquaintance with the Christian revelation, which enables us to see them so distinctly there, and they have been very obscurely discerned by those who have not the benefit of this aid. We might learn something, also, from the great human lights which have adorned and instructed the world in all ages; but not enough, amidst their own vague and contradictory notions, to be a sure and satisfactory guide. For it is certain that, however great the wisdom of the world may have been, still "the world by wisdom knew not God."

What man might be capable of learning, under any circumstances, from his own unassisted inquiry, it were unprofitable to discuss. All history declares the plain and incontrovertible fact, that by his own unassisted inquiry he has learned comparatively nothing. The certainty and definiteness of the very first principles he owes to the instruction of Jesus; and if he have added any thing by his own efforts, it is because he has built upon this foundation, and been guided by this light. Who knows any thing of God, "but the Son, and he to whom the Son has revealed him"? Who understands any thing of the purposes of the divine will, but they who have received it from Jesus? Look over the history of the world, brethren; in former and in present times, in Christian and in pagan lands, — where do you find religious knowledge, and from what fountains does it flow? Do you not trace all its streams to Nazareth? Do you not find every beam emanating from the Star of

Bethlehem? And is not every region dark and unwatei which these do not visit? Look also to your own min and consider whether you possess any valuable knowled concerning God, any certain and satisfactory truth, a sustaining and peace-giving acquaintance with things inv ible and future, which is not derived from the Christi doctrine. And will you not say, then, with earnest fai "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words eternal life."

5. Again, we are to regard Jesus Christ as the foun tion of *true morality;* as not only revealing the true syst of religious faith, and the character and purposes of Go but as bearing an authorized communication concerni right and wrong, and establishing the laws of virtue.

It is a distinction of his religious system, that it is en nently a system of morals, resting on authority. The have been other moral systems, but they have rested speculation, and were therefore imperfect both in theo and in practice. There have been other religious systen but they have been separated from morality, and have pr duced the monstrous absurdity of open and undisguis alliance between religion and vice. Religion, among t pagan nations, has been engaged in little else than exp dients to appease capricious divinities, and devices f reconciling the consciences of men to their sins, and kee ing the state in order by mystery and spectacle. Jes builds his whole system on opposite principles, and makes thorough, undeviating, searching morality its essential ar vital spirit, without which piety is but hypocrisy, and wo ship but blasphemy.

The character of his morality, also, differs from th which has been taught by the wise, and prevailed in t customs of the world. They have appealed to the sensiti

sentiment of honor, and endeavored to make men virtuous from selfishness and pride. They have cultivated a spurious virtue, upon the soil of interest, policy, and expediency. They have set value on the superficial and showy, rather than the deep and real. They have sometimes placed virtue in passion, and sometimes in insensibility, and sometimes in the useless and wasteful seclusion of indolent contemplation. The moral principle of the world has thus been always unfixed and wavering; it has fluctuated with fashion and circumstances, and changed as humor or accident might dictate; for the guides of the world have erected their systems on false theories, and on wrong and inadequate motives; or if they had not done so, yet they could settle nothing and control no one, for they had no authority. But Jesus speaks with authority — the authority of a commissioned messenger from the moral Governor and Judge of men. He communicates, from the instructions of infinite rectitude, the knowledge of duty, the boundaries of right and wrong, the definitions and motives of virtue, the promises and threats of retribution.

The nature and requisitions of true morality are thus established by one who has a right to establish them, and from whose word there can lie no appeal. Our own feelings, passions, and whims, by which we are so ready to be ruled, must give up the reins to his law. To that must be yielded the decision in all questions of conduct and duty. If God had not spoken, we might have inquired, "What will be convenient or pleasant, what will gratify our passions, or promote our present interests;" but now the inquiry must be, "What doth the Lord our God require of us?" What is the language of Christ? What is the spirit of his religion? How are we instructed by his example? The conduct which cannot bear the scrutiny of such questions is wrong.

The morality which is not conformable to this standard is unsound and false. No matter if it be agreeable to some theoretical rule of abstract right, or some high-toned principle of honor, or some proud and unswerving law which we have laid down to ourselves. No matter if it conform to some strong feeling within, which claims to be the voice of God, or to some urgent circumstances of expediency, which, we persuade ourselves, are the monitions of his providence. Still, if it contradict the pure and holy rule of Christ, if it be inconsistent with the benevolent and devout spirit of his gospel, it is fundamentally and utterly to be condemned; it is immoral and bad. For true morality stands only in the instructions of him who is the way, the truth, and the life; and no other foundation can man lay.

6. We may say once more, Christ is the only foundation of the *believer's hope*. It is from him and his gospel that we learn those truths concerning the mercy and placability of God, which give hope of pardon on repentance, and of acceptance in our imperfect attempts to please him; — from him alone, also, that we derive sufficient assurance of a future life, and an existence of eternal purity and peace. Upon these points the understanding might speculate, and sometimes plausibly conjecture; but what could it ever *know?* What *did* it ever KNOW in the uninstructed lands of heathenism? The whole history of the world teaches us, that on these points, so interesting to man's heart, so essential to man's happiness, there has been nothing but superstition and dim conjecture, except where the gospel has been revealed. It is the message of Jesus Christ, which has taught the grace of Almighty God; which has proclaimed his long-suffering and compassion; which has encouraged sinners to repent and return by invitations of forgiving love;

which has declared the kind allowance of our Father for unavoidable imperfection, and thus given courage to human weakness. It is this only which proclaims to a world lying in wickedness, that "God hath not appointed it to wrath, but to obtain salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ," and "hath sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." Man — doubting, frail, tempted, fearful — hears the voice of love, and looks up in the humble assurance of faith. No longer an alien, but a son, he seizes the out-stretched hand of his blessed Lord, and goes on his way rejoicing.

There is another hope which he founds on the same rock — the hope of a coming immortality. Once he was in bondage through the fear of death. But now his Savior hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light. The bitterness of death is passed. There is light within the tomb. There is a visible region of glory beyond it. And the child of earth, who once shuddered and was wretched in the dread of everlasting extinction, is now able to smile upon the dreary pathway to the grave, and triumph over the terrors of corruption.

What an inestimable privilege is this! With his open Bible before him, and the image of his gracious Savior in his mind, how does the conscience-stricken penitent rejoice amid his tears, in the hope of offered pardon! How does the humble and self-distrusting believer, who stands trembling and abashed in the presence of infinite purity, find comfort in the encouraging accents of Christ's soothing voice, and the hope of acceptance at the throne of grace! How does the reasoning and dying offspring of the dust — to whom existence, and friendship, and virtue are dear — rejoice with holy gratitude in the hope that his existence shall be renewed, and his desires satisfied, in heaven!

Thanks be to God for this unspeakable gift — this glorious hope, which in every season of trial, and every stormy strait of sorrow and fear, is "an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast."

It is not necessary to go farther than this. We perceive that the foundation of the Christian church, and of all true religion in the world, and of individual faith, knowledge, virtue, and hope, is laid in Jesus Christ. All our religious light, security, and peace rest upon this rock. Other we have none, and can have none. Let us leave this, and where shall we go? Who will teach us the words of eternal life? who instruct us in the things which pertain to our everlasting peace? who guide us to the Father of love, and open to us the gate of heaven? Every other guide is uncertain, every other path is dark. Men have followed them, and gone astray; have walked in them, and stumbled; have sought rest in them, and found none. There is none other commissioned from heaven, but the Son of the virgin. "There is no name given among men, whereby we can be saved, but that of Jesus Christ."

SERMON II.

JESUS THE MESSIAH.

MATTHEW XVI. 15, 16.

HE SAITH UNTO THEM, BUT WHOM SAY YE THAT I AM? AND SIMON PETER ANSWERED AND SAID, THOU ART THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD.

THE question which our Lord here proposes to his disciples, which agitated with intense interest the whole Jewish nation during his ministry, has lost none of its interest or importance in the lapse of ages. It was, and is, the question upon which rests the decision of his claims to the obedience and gratitude of mankind. It is a question, too, which has received different answers, even from his own disciples in his own church, as it did from his countrymen while he lived. The passion for speculation, and the fondness for opinion, have found exercise even on this subject, and have thrown perplexity and debate on what is in itself plain and simple, and has been most clearly decided, in the only important particular, by the express authority of Scripture. To the Scriptures, then, we have recourse; and it is truly matter of gratitude, that a distinct reply to the inquiry is there recorded, which satisfied our Lord, and which consequently ought to satisfy us.

If it was sufficient for Peter to know and acknowledge him as THE MESSIAH, it must also be sufficient for us. No man may demand or desire a more full and satisfactory reply, than that which drew upon the apostle the memorable blessing. No man may doubt that a similar blessing awaits all, who shall make the same profession with equal earnestness, faith, and devotion, and carry it out to the same practical consequences. In order to this, we must understand what such a profession implies; what is intended by his being "the Christ, the Son of God," and what is the value of faith in him as such. To illustrate these objects is the purpose of the present discourse.

It is to be remarked, first of all, that the titles given to our Lord in the text are unquestionably synonymous, and are used to indicate the same office. The ancient Jews familiarly employed the phrase *Son of God* as one of the names of the Christ, or Messiah. They used them both promiscuously, to denote that great Prince and Deliverer, whom they also styled *King of Israel* and *Son of David*, and whom they were expecting to fulfil the prophecies. That the titles are thus equivalent to each other is rendered evident by many passages in the New Testament. Thus, in the beginning of our Lord's ministry, Andrew came and told Peter, "We have found the *Messiah*." Philip said to Nathanael, "We have found him of whom Moses, in the law, and the prophets, did write." And Nathanael cried out to Jesus, "Thou art the *Son of God*, thou art the King of Israel." It is obvious that each of them, using different language, intended to express the same thing — that this was the expected Messiah. Again, when the elders and scribes demanded of Jesus if he were *the Christ*, he replied indirectly, "Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God." They immediately exclaimed, "Art thou

then the *Son of God?*" In this case nothing can be plainer than that the two phrases are of the same import. There is also a passage in the first epistle of John, in which their equivalency "is stated with the precision of a syllogism."

"Whosoever believeth *that Jesus is the Christ*, is born of God."

"Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world."

"Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth *that Jesus is the Son of God?*"

It is thus plain, that, according to the usage of the Jewish people, adopted and sanctioned by Jesus and the apostles, the title *Son of God* has precisely the same significance with that of *Messiah*.* As if to intimate this, the evangelists are wont to place them together; so that we read, in numerous passages, "the Christ, the Son of God," evidently put in apposition, as interpreters of each other.

The term *Messiah*, or *Christ*, is the special, peculiar, distinguishing title accorded to Jesus. Its original signification is *the Anointed;* and it embraces whatever office or duty it was the purpose of his mission to perform. In a word, it is his official designation; and its importance and completeness may be estimated by remarking, that it was

* "To be the *Son of God*, and to be *the Christ*, are but different expressions of the same thing." "It is the very same thing to believe *that Jesus is the Christ*, and that *Jesus is the Son of God*, express it how you please. This alone is the faith which can regenerate a man, and put a divine spirit into him; that is, make him a conqueror over the world, as Jesus was." —*Dr. Patrick, bishop of Ely*, as quoted by Locke, in the postscript to his First Vindication.

On the whole subject of faith in Jesus as the Christ, I refer the reader very earnestly to that invaluable treatise of Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity, as delivered in the Scriptures.*

by this title he was predicted, expected, announced, received, acknowledged, and persecuted, preached to the nations, and believed on in the world. From the days of the prophets who foretold his appearing, to the song of the angels at his nativity, and the establishment of his kingdom amongst the Gentiles, this is his chosen title; and by this it is declared that "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ."

Under this title his coming was *predicted*. When Daniel spake of him, he called him "Messiah the Prince;" and Isaiah alluded to the name when he said, "Jehovah hath *anointed* me to preach glad tidings."

Under this title his advent was anxiously *expected*. The Jews waited long for their promised deliverer and king, and the name by which they knew him was the Messiah. When the Baptist came, they earnestly asked if he were the Christ; and they pressed in crowds around the path of Jesus with the same inquiry. Even the Samaritans had this expectation; so that the woman at Sichar said, "I know that when the Messiah cometh, who is called Christ, he will tell us all things."

Under this title he was *announced* by the angels at Bethlehem, — "Unto you is born this day a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

Under this title he was *received and acknowledged*. The twelve followed him, because they had "found the Messiah." Peter in our text and elsewhere, Martha at the grave of Lazarus, and the man blind from his birth, confessed and honored him as the predicted Messiah. As such the multitudes waited on him, and "would take him by force to make him king," and welcomed him with hosannas to the holy city.

As the Messiah, he became subject to *persecution*.

The authorities of the land decreed, "that if any man should confess him to be the Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue." They accused him of blasphemy before their own council, because he claimed to be the Son of God, that is, the Messiah; and before the Roman magistrate they arraigned him for treason, in saying "that he himself is Christ, a king." As such, the soldiers mocked him with a crown and sceptre; and the brutal multitude, at the foot of the cross, insulted his suffering with the cry, "If thou be the Christ, save thyself; come down from the cross, and we will believe."

It was as the Messiah, likewise, that he was *preached* to the nations, and *believed* on in the world. Wherever the apostles went with the message of Heaven, this was the burden of their preaching, "reasoning out of the Scriptures, and proving that Jesus is the Christ." To this when the people consented, they were baptized and acknowledged as disciples; and on this truth churches were gathered and founded. The disciples were so familiarly known from this leading article of their faith, that the name of *Christians* was given them at Antioch, and has adhered to them to the present time.

Thus it appears that the title generally used in the Scriptures to designate the peculiar character and essential office of Jesus, is that of the Messiah. We proceed to inquire concerning the nature and objects of the office thus designated.

It is a remarkable feature in God's moral government of the world, that it is constituted of successive dispensations, each more perfect than the preceding, by which increasing knowledge and more perfect institutions have been given to men, "as they were able to bear them." In the early communications of God, we find frequent intimations of a pur-

pose to make a final and complete revelation, and to establish on earth, as the greatest boon of divine benevolence, a permanent dispensation of truth and grace, beneath which a purer knowledge of God should prevail, the dominion of evil should be shaken, and order, peace, and happiness hold universal sway. To introduce this state of things, was the duty assigned to the Messiah. For this purpose he was commissioned and sent forth. And whatever might be necessary for the accomplishment of this great moral design, forms part of his commission, and is comprised in the objects of his office.

To this end, as the very title by which he is known indicates, he was set apart and consecrated. The *anointing* was a solemn form of consecration, by which the priests and kings, and sometimes the prophets,* were separated to their respective services among the chosen people. It was the most significant act in an august and imposing ceremony of inauguration. It was the sacred sign of devotion to the appointed office or work, and came, at last, to stand for the thing signified, in cases where the sign itself had not been used. Thus Cyrus is called the *anointed*, when commissioned for the overthrow of Babylon and the restoration of the Jews; and the patriarchs, and even the whole people of Israel, are so named,† because separated from the rest of mankind for the accomplishment of peculiar purposes in the moral government of the world. In conformity with this usage, the holiest and chief messenger of God to man, appointed to effect the most important changes and introduce the perfect dispensation, — to take place, in the government of the church, of all the priests, and kings, and prophets, who had, under the former economy, been its mediators, instructors, and rulers, — is for this cause styled

* See 1 Kings xix. 16. † Psalm cv. 15; Hab. iii. 13.

emphatically *the Anointed;* "above his fellows," says the Scripture, because consecrated to a duty and dignity with which none other can compare; "with the Holy Spirit and with power," because it was not for temporal and earthly, but for spiritual and eternal purposes.

We may, therefore, without indulging a fanciful analogy, consider the Messiah as uniting in his own character all the sacred offices of the ancient church, to which the oil of consecration was applied, and use them for the illustration of his character. This we may the rather do, because each title is freely accorded to him in the sacred writings.

The office of the prophets was to instruct, to teach, to admonish, and to foretell future events. They were the guardians of the public religion and morals, appointed to watch against corruption and sin, and to proclaim the warnings and judgments of Heaven against infidelity and crime. It was not an hereditary office, but one of special appointment, at least in its higher departments, to which express inspiration was necessary, and to which miraculous powers were often added. This office, unquestionably, and in its highest character, was comprehended in that of the Messiah. In this character Moses is supposed to have spoken of him — "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up to you from among your brethren, like unto me." In this character the people expected him — "Art thou that Prophet?" was their inquiry; and when they accompanied him with hosannas to Jerusalem, "This is Jesus," said they, "the Prophet of Galilee." So his disciples described him — "a prophet mighty in word and deed." So he called himself, when he said, "It cannot be that a prophet should perish out of Jerusalem." And such he proved himself, by the works of supernatural power which attested his divine authority; by the holy instructions which flowed from his

lips, surpassing all the moral wisdom of man; by the fidelity of his earnest and affectionate warnings, his pathetic expostulations, his powerful rebukes, his authoritative denunciations, such as no other man ever uttered, — before which the proud and hardened quailed as he spake, the ministers of justice were driven back, and the prejudiced and powerful silenced; and by his many predictions concerning the future, — which the world has shuddered to see accomplished, and which even our eyes behold in a course of fulfilment.

The office of priest is also supposed to be comprehended in the Messiahship of Jesus. It is observable, however, that this title is never given him in the New Testament, excepting in the epistle to the Hebrews; and there it is in a peculiar relation, and for peculiar purposes, which cannot be considered in the present connection. The priesthood amongst the Jews was an hereditary office, confined to the family of Levi. It was an office separated from the world, consecrated to religious duties, devoted to the service of the Temple, and especially engaged in the various ceremonies of an extensive ritual, and the offerings and incense of the altar. It is plain, therefore, that, although Jesus was literally a prophet, he could not have been literally a priest, because he was of Judah, not of Levi, and was not in any sense attached to the Temple, or occupied in its service. But in as far as he was separated from the world, and set apart to the promotion of religion, and lived wholly in a state of consecration to God, so far he might be regarded as possessing the sacred character of the priesthood; just as his disciples, for similar reasons, are called "kings and priests unto God," and "a royal priesthood." So far, also, as his sufferings in our behalf operate as a means of leading us to repentance and holiness, and of effecting that

forgiveness of sin, which it was the office of the Jewish high priest to announce on the annual day of propitiation, so far Jesus may be regarded as the "high priest of our profession."

The office of the Messiah may be in part, also, explained by that of king. The kings of Israel are familiarly known in the Old Testament as "the Lord's anointed;" and as the Messiah was to spring from their race, and sit on the throne of his father David, and their government was to be on his shoulder, so he was to be accounted king no less than prophet. It may be remarked, indeed, that it was peculiarly and eminently as king that the prophets had spoken of him, and his countrymen expected him. "King of Israel" was one title equivalent to "Messiah;" and "*kingdom* of heaven" was the phrase that expressed the state of the church beneath his influence. When "God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power," it was to be prince over his spiritual kingdom among men. The people were looking for a temporal prince, who should literally accomplish the words of the promise, and "sit on the throne of his father David;" and therefore it was that they sought "to take him by force and make him king." He was on this pretence arraigned before the Roman authority, as one who made himself king in opposition to the emperor. And therefore, when Pilate asked him if he were a king, he denied it not, but only said, in explanation, "My kingdom is not of this world." Peter, accordingly, declares him "a Prince and Savior;" and Paul speaks of the period when, having accomplished his royal labors, and "put down all rule, authority, and power," he shall "deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father."

All this implies that the office of Messiah embraces that of king, and that he is, in the language of Daniel, "Mes-

siah the Prince." To him is committed the dominion over the moral provinces which form the church of God. He is made supreme in all concerns of religion and truth, of conscience and duty. The command is given to him over the heart and life, the opinions, the character, and the destination of the intelligent children of earth. This is the most splendid and extensive kingdom ever set up among men — an empire to which the magnificence and power of all the empires that have flourished in the past ages of time are not to be compared, and to which all the concerns of all the states of the world are to be finally made subservient. Already is this in part effected. Already does his peaceful and spiritual authority sway the minds of men beyond the power of human law and the authority of human custom. Already are the manners of the nations and the policy of princes modified and guided by his superior influence. But he has not yet taken to himself all his power. As knowledge and light advance, the minds of men shall be yet more completely subjected to him; all hearts shall bow before him, and "every tongue confess him to be Lord." Human power shall be controlled by his rule, human laws be limited by his precepts, and all the institutions of earth be moulded in conformity with his spirit. God shall lift the arm of his providence over the nations, "and overturn, and overturn, and overturn," till "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."

Such is a general description of the work which the Messiah was commissioned to perform, and of the effects which his ministrations were to produce. He was to make the final revelation of God's will; to establish a church which, as a spiritual empire beneath his authority, should perpetuate the knowledge and influence of religious truth;

to spread light, and happiness, and peace, by means of his institutions; to free men from the bondage of superstition, the degradation of vice, and the terrors of death; in a word, to set up the dominion of God's holy and parental government, and prepare men for heaven by bringing them on earth to the love and practice of those holy graces which form the bliss of the good hereafter. "To this end he was born, and to this end he came into the world, that he might bear witness to the truth"—the truth which "makes free" from corruption and sin, and "sanctifies" the soul.

Three remarks follow from our subject.

1. It is evident, from what has been said, that the character in which our Lord appears, and in which he claims to be received and honored, is an *official character* simply. He comes to the world invested with a certain office, whose main duties have been mentioned, and is an object of attention and reverence as holding that office. It is *the dignity of the commission*, which is evidently referred to in all these representations. They plainly have no allusion to the nature of his person, or the rank of his being, or his original station of existence. They suggest no subtile discussions concerning his essence and attributes. They are satisfied with pointing him out to us as one ordained to accomplish the most beneficent purposes of Heaven, and for this reason demanding the faith and obedience of man.

Let us, then, be satisfied with knowing and holding this; for it is all which the Scriptures have made essential on the point, or of which they seem anxious to persuade us. It has happened, indeed, that men have ever been solicitous to ascertain something further, and have persuaded themselves that a very positive decision is necessary on points relating, not only to the authority, but to the nature, of Jesus. Perhaps it is not to be expected that we should be

free from all solicitude on this subject. But whatever our solicitude may be, it should never blind us to the fact, that it is the receiving of Jesus *in the offices and relations* to which the Father has appointed him, which the Scriptures make the essential thing; and no decision of ours on more intricate and curious questions can affect our Christian claim, if they do not affect our faith and obedience on this great point. If we truly hold this, all our knowledge on other questions could add nothing to our conviction of the certainty and obligation of his truth, or to the support and comfort of our faith; because, in any case, he that receives him receives the Father who sent him, and he that rejects him rejects the Father. His doctrines and his promises, his precepts and his threatenings, have divine authority; and in no case could they have more. His life has accomplished all which it was in any case designed to accomplish, and his death has all the efficacy which it pleased God to appoint it to have. To what purpose, then, our anxiety to ascertain the mystery of his nature? Why fancy it essential to understand the secret of his being? When we receive Jesus as the Messiah, we KNOW that we receive him as we are commanded to receive him. It is the good profession of Peter and of Martha; it drew the express commendation of their Lord; it is that for which the apostles argued, and on which the early churches were founded; and why should we suffer ourselves to be perplexed by the contentions and mysteries of later ages, when we may find rest in that simple doctrine, which gladdened the hearts of the first disciples, and secured the unity of the primitive body?

2. For the same reasons, the profession of this faith by others should be sufficient ground of accounting them Christians and admitting them to fellowship. So the apos-

tles thought and practised, and we have no right to depart from their example. Indeed, if we do not stop here, it is difficult to say where we may stop. If we may add *one* to the article which they have declared essential to the Christian name and fellowship, how many may we not add? We should learn a caution from the history of the church; for this proneness to increase the catalogue of fundamental truths has been a most fruitful source of confusion and misery. Every generation and every separate body has some peculiar mode of viewing religious truth, and some favorite doctrine of its own, which it soon magnifies into a matter of essential importance, and expects to find in all who profess to be Christians. It is forthwith added to the list of fundamentals, and made part of the standard to which all must conform. This conformity to a various and many-colored system has been the attempt of all ages. To secure it, the peace of the church has been sacrificed, the rights of conscience and man trampled upon, and oppressions exercised in the name of Christ, which might disgrace the most savage tyranny that has ever warred against human peace. And all to what purpose? To secure a uniformity of belief in a multiplicity of articles — a thing which never has been, and which, it is time for us to know, never can be, effected, while God is pleased to allow to men liberty of conscience; and to coerce conscience is a crime, which always has been, and ever must be, attended with misery. But leave the conscience free, and set up no faith beyond that which Jesus demanded and Peter professed, — then the divisions of Christendom might end, and "the broken churches be healed." That uniformity, which has been hitherto sought for by compulsion and fire, will spring up spontaneously as soon as believers shall think it sufficient to honor a common Master in his favorite and distinctive office.

Undoubtedly other articles belong to the Christian system; and he who has received this will learn them of his Master. What is to be insisted upon is, that we have no right to dictate on the subject, nor to reject any one who holds this, on the ground that he has understood some of his Lord's instructions in a different sense from our understanding of them. "By taking Jesus to be the Messiah, he is made a subject of his kingdom; that is, a Christian. To say that an explicit knowledge of, and actual obedience to, all the laws of his kingdom, is what is required to make him a subject, is what was never said of any other kingdom. A man must be a subject before he is bound to obey;* and he is bound to obey the Lord of the kingdom, and not his fellow-subjects. "He stands or falls to his own master." How shall we dare to exclude any one from the title and privileges of his reign, because he will not substitute some other for the simple profession of Peter? How shall we dare to say, "You shall not pass over the Jordan of life, because you cannot utter the complicated Shibboleth that we have framed"?

3. In the last place, those who receive Jesus as the Messiah, acknowledge him to be their teacher and supreme guide in religion and duty, from whose authority there lies no appeal. "All things," he says, "are committed to me by my Father;" "neither came I of myself, but he sent me." He is presented to the attention of men, not as one whom they would do wisely to accept, but whom, also, they are at liberty to refuse. For such is the commission he bears, that they cannot refuse him without rejecting the Father, who sent him. "He that honoreth not the Son hon-

* See Locke's Second Vindication, Works, fol. ii. 625. The form of the sentence is a little varied, to suit it to the connection.

oreth not the Father." In regard to other teachers, it is optional with us to learn of them or not. We may become their disciples if we please; but there is no obligation to become so. We may read their volumes if we please; but if we please we may neglect them. But not so in regard to God's Anointed. Such are his pretensions, concerning whom a voice came from heaven, "This is my beloved Son; HEAR HIM," that, if we turn to him a deaf and prejudiced ear, it is at the peril of our souls. It is in a manner the essence of his office, that it has clothed him with a divine right over us. Whether we will hear, or whether we will forbear, that right exists, and his message is the message of God. He is our Master, and Guide, and King, and we cannot escape the obligation to follow his instructions and obey his laws. There must be no interference with his authority, no hesitation in our allegiance, no partial compliance with his requisitions. But at all times, in all places, in all concerns, — in the cares of life and in the purposes of the heart; in the duties of the world and in the preparation for death, — his doctrine must be our supreme law, and his precepts our only path.

Let us be persuaded, my dear brethren, to know and to feel this. Let the impression sink deeply in our hearts, that the moral sway of Christ extends, without exception, to all we are, and purpose, and do, and hope. Let us feel — and O that we might act upon the feeling — that in him we have a friend, sent to us from God, that he may lead us to heaven. As such let us acknowledge and welcome him. The anthems of angels announce his nativity; the voice of God bears witness at his baptism; the powers of nature wait upon him, and obey him, while he lives; they are shaken and convulsed when he dies; the grave refuses to retain him, and his resurrection declares him to be the Son

of God with power. He sends forth his light and truth, and the moral darkness of the world is dissipated. The temples of superstition fall, the halls of false philosophy are deserted, the humble and neglected are elevated to dignity and hope, the troubled are made acquainted with peace, the contrite are forgiven, and the dying smile with hope. "Old things are passed away, and behold all is become new." Happy are they who have eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hearts to feel, what the grace of God has thus accomplished for the children of men! Happy they who are partakers of this moral regeneration! who know, from personal experience, the worth of these messages of life, and the joy and peace they impart to the believing! But miserable they who have no sense of the greatest work which has been wrought upon our world! who have no share in that joy which tunes the voices of heaven, and changes the face of earth! Unhappy men! who see it all, and yet perceive it not; who hear it all, and yet understand it not; who have thus shut themselves out from the most elevated happiness of earth, and the sublimest, the only satisfying prospects, which are offered to the human soul. "O that they were wise; that they would understand this; that they would consider their latter end!"

SERMON III.

SUFFICIENCY AND EFFICACY OF FAITH IN THE MESSIAH.

1 JOHN V. 5.

WHO IS HE THAT OVERCOMETH THE WORLD, BUT HE THAT BELIEVETH THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD.

To receive Jesus as the Son of God, the appointed Messiah, is, we have already seen, to receive him in the character in which he is especially revealed, and with the profession which he himself declared sufficient. It is the primary and fundamental article of the system, in which, however they may otherwise differ, all believers are agreed, and which all may find sufficient who will receive it in the true spirit; for small and simple as it may appear, it comprises "the wisdom of God and the power of God," and has that efficacy which shall "overcome the world."

It is sometimes, however, thought inconceivable that belief in a proposition apparently so inadequate should produce such vast effects. When we hear with what energy the gospel operates, and what extensive effects it is designed to produce, we fancy there must be some extensive, complicated, wonderful machinery; and with a ready feeling of incredulity, we object that so simple a statement of the Christian faith must be wholly feeble and inefficient.

To this objection, which indeed may seem plausible, I will first offer a reply, and then attempt to describe the operation of this principle, so as to prove that it is not deficient in energy.

The objection proceeds on a wrong assumption. It presumes that we are capable of deciding beforehand what faith would be sufficient or insufficient for the purposes of religion, and that we are at liberty to receive or reject, according to the estimate of our own judgment. But certainly we are not to trust our own antecedent judgment in a case like this. The Christian system is not an invention of ours, neither can we control the power it may exert, or determine the consequences that may flow from it. The whole is dependent on that divine authority by which it has been communicated to us. It is matter of revelation and command; and if this simple faith be written in its records, we have no right to interpose our judgment, and say it must be insufficient. If the express declaration of Scripture be, that it shall "overcome the world," we have no right to step forward and allege that it is impossible.

Besides, why should we imagine it inadequate to the purposes for which it is ordained? Is it not the manner of God to bring about great effects from apparently feeble causes? It is so in every part of his works. His mightiest rivers, which roll over immense regions, and bear the fertilizing influence of his providence to cities and nations, are collected by him from the drops that trickle from the rocks of the mountains, and the vapors that fall in dew upon their sides. His tremendous forests, that cover continents with their shade, are reared by him from a few seeds, so small that the wind blows them about as it were in sport. The countless multitudes of his children, who have acted and been happy on this stage of being, and are to crowd the

habitations of eternity with life and bliss, were gradually collected from the few particles of dust which composed the first man's frame. So true it is that he displays his power and scatters his blessings by the operation of small means, rather than by large exertions; gradually, rather than suddenly. So true it is that, in all his ways, "God chooses the weak things of the world to confound those that are mighty." Why, then, should it be thought incredible that this simple truth, *Jesus is the Christ*, should be that which is to justify, and sanctify, and save a miserable world? Small it may be, and insignificant it may seem to man's perverted vision; but it may be all powerful in His hands, who has caused a few Galilean peasants to change the face of empires, and is able even of the stones to raise up children to Abraham.

This objection is also sometimes urged through a misunderstanding of the actual state of the question. It is argued against, as if we had asserted this to be the whole, as well as the foundation of Christianity; as if we made no account of the building that is to be raised upon it; as if we inculcated a "faith without works." But this misapprehension might be easily removed. If one should say, that the root is the essential part of the tree, he would not be supposed to mean that the branches and fruit are of no value; and if one should carefully plant the root in his ground, we should take it for granted that he desired, and would cherish, the branches and fruit. So it is in the Christian system. When we call this doctrine the essential article, we do not undervalue all others, nor declare that there is none other. But we mean that, if this be faithfully planted and take root in the man, the rest of the system will grow from it, and the fruits of the Spirit be borne upon its branches. And therefore we say, that, if we see a man earnestly cultivating

this, it should be satisfactory evidence to us that he is a disciple, deserving our charity and fellowship. We have no right to discard him because his trunk leans a little to another direction from our own, nor because the branches are a little more or a little less numerous. If they bear fruit, well; we may judge from that whether the root have been well planted, and whether the tree be good.

Consider, then, the natural operation and direct tendency of this principle. One believes, sincerely and religiously, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Now, I ask, is it possible for him to stop here, and no consequences to follow? If he do not believe it sincerely and religiously, — if he take it only as any other historical truth, but not as having more concern with himself than the fact that Alexander was a conqueror, or Xerxes a king of Persia, — then, undoubtedly, he may stop at the barren assent. But if, as I said, he believe it sincerely and religiously, is it not impossible that he should rest here? For what is implied in such a belief? A belief in God, the Supreme Governor and Father, who had for ages spoken of that Messiah by his prophets, and whose purposes he was sent to fulfil; a belief in his character, authority, purposes, and will, as the moral Ruler of men; a belief that all the instruction of Jesus rests on the authority of God, and a consequent reception of whatever he teaches, as the true doctrine of religion; a belief that the way of acceptance and life is revealed by him, and that to disregard and disobey him is to disregard the authority of God, and to subject ourselves to his displeasure to whom we are accountable at last. The mind of him who RELIGIOUSLY believes that Jesus is the Christ, cannot escape these consequences. They are momentous; they are affecting; they are practical consequences. They touch the springs of action; they agitate

him with hope and fear; they teach him that he has an infinite interest at stake; they make him anxious for his eternal destiny. He feels that here he is bound by obligations which cannot be broken; that there is but one path left him — that of implicit submission to the instructions of this heavenly Messenger, and a life of devotion, repentance, and holiness; since it were an insane inconsistency to acknowledge this powerful truth, and yet live disregardful of its authority, and uninfluenced by its requisitions.

It is to be considered, also, that this faith is something more, much more, than mere belief, inasmuch as the idea of confidence or trust makes an essential part of it. To believe that Jesus is the Son of God, is to have *confidence* in him as such. Many examples might be adduced in which this sense is most obviously implied; as where our Lord says, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." In these expressions is manifestly intended confidence, trust. Indeed, nothing can be plainer, than that there can be no real religious faith, without implicit trust in its object. And, accordingly, all the examples of faith, which the apostle has collected in his eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, — Abraham and Moses, the prophets and the martyrs, — are indisputably examples of confidence in divine providence, trust in divine promises: and the faith by which the Christian, like those ancient worthies, is to overcome the world, is in like manner constituted of firm, unreserved trust.

In this manner, then, a true reception of Jesus, and trust in him, as the commissioned Messiah, the authorized Teacher, the appointed Legislator and Guide, inevitably leads to the Christian graces; they are the legitimate and necessary consequences. If such a faith exist, it cannot stand alone; it must, it will, pervade and influence the

soul; it will be seen and felt in the thoughts, the sentiments, the desires, the dispositions, the actions. It is not itself the whole, but it gives life to the whole. Every principle necessary to the Christian system, and to acceptance with God, is connected with it and flows from it.

There are one or two passages in close connection with that of our text, which confirm this estimate of its moral efficacy. In the fifteenth verse of the preceding chapter, it is written, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." What stronger assertion could we desire? And how can we fancy any weakness in that faith, to which the apostle bears the strong testimony, that God is in him who professes it, and he in God?

Again he says, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." What further testimony could be desired to the efficacy of this faith? He who truly possesses it, is regenerate, is become one of the adopted family of God, one of the household of heaven; and thus in him the very purpose of the Christian dispensation is accomplished.

The same apostle tells us that the very object of writing his book of the Gospel, was, to establish the faith "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, they might have life through his name." Words cannot more distinctly state the necessary article of faith, or more decidedly assert its efficacy. Who can account it insufficient, when John declares that it opens the doors of life?

Add to these the words of our text — "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" I ask, therefore, again, what further can we desire? What stronger testimony can be given to the strength of this principle? If it be sufficient to overcome

the world, to give life through his name, to effect the Christian regeneration, and a spiritual union with God, to what purpose can it be insufficient, to what work unequal? If this faith be weak, what faith shall be called strong?

Having thus established, from various considerations, the sufficiency of the principle laid down in our text, let us further illustrate the subject by inquiring *in what manner it operates* so as to secure this effect.

It operates by strengthening the soul with such principles, and filling it with such resources, that it does not need the world for its happiness, but is capable of being happy independently of it. The world ruins a man by its temptations to sin, because he foolishly imagines indulgence in sin necessary to his happiness. The world makes a man miserable by its uncertainties and calamities, because he has set his heart upon its prosperity to make him happy. If it were not so, — if he had provided sufficient sources of happiness in things independent of a sinful and changing world, — then he certainly would not run into these destructive indulgences, nor wreck his peace by trusting to the deceitful joys of life. And this is precisely the work of faith. It furnishes him with other means and resources of felicity, so rich, so abundant, that he has no need to draw upon sin or pleasure, and therefore is not corrupted by them, nor made wretched by temporal losses.

This may be better understood, perhaps, by observing the same thing in other examples. It is very observable, in the experience of life, that different men, equally eager in the pursuit of happiness, place their dependence for happiness in very different things; so that what is absolutely essential to one, may be of no importance to another, because his affections lie elsewhere. For example: here is one, who pursues sensual indulgence, lives for his appetites,

and is wretched if they be restrained. Here is another, who regards property as the chief good, and, being wholly devoted to its acquisition, passes by, with supreme indifference, those indulgences which are essential to the other. Here is a third, who is solicitous for nothing but the acquisition of knowledge and literary eminence; who feels that for himself happiness can be found only in retirement and study; and he would feel small disturbance at a reverse of fortune affecting him in other respects. Instances of this sort are of daily observation — where one man pursues with the extremest earnestness, and loses with the deepest affliction, what another would think worth no pains to acquire, and would relinquish without a sigh. This depends entirely upon what each had persuaded himself to be essential to his happiness. The loss of the merest trifle, if he have accounted it essential to his happiness, may rack him with intolerable pangs. The heaviest calamity, if he have placed his happiness elsewhere, may scarcely cost him a tear. Ahab, the great king of Israel, had set his heart upon an insignificant vineyard, and, because he could not obtain it, thought himself too wretched to live. But Paul, the apostle, "suffered the loss of all things," and gave them up cheerfully, because to none of them had he trusted for happiness, but his whole soul was absorbed in something else.

This explains to us the power of faith, and shows the secret of its operation. If avarice is able to overcome sensuality, so that the miser is scrupulously temperate; if the love of learning can overcome the love of pleasure, so that the student will deny himself even to the loss of health; if the desire of distinction will overcome the love of ease, and of friends, and every other affection, so that the ambitious conqueror will live a long life of hardship, privation, and danger, because his only happiness is to be great, — then,

I ask, do you not understand how the noble and celestial principle of faith may overcome all these, yea, may "overcome the world"? Do you not see how this mighty principle — which extends to things infinite, and glories immeasurable, and ages that cannot end — may become a RULING PASSION in the soul; may open a fountain of felicity which shall make all others tasteless; may offer to inquiring man an honor and peace, in possessing which he shall think himself more than recompensed for the loss of all others? As the mother, — who once, in the young hour of beauty and enjoyment, sailed round the giddy circle of pleasure, and could imagine no happiness of life but in the party and the dance, in admiration and gayety; but now, with her little charge about her, rarely goes from home, and is satisfied to sit by them night and day — so changed that she regrets no enjoyments abroad, and feels not a desire to partake what was once her only pleasure, — so he that is wedded to heavenly faith, absorbed in its new and purer employments and satisfactions, sees nothing to regret in the forbidden things of the world; is not unreasonably troubled by its cares, nor tempted by its seductions, nor overwhelmed by its disappointments: he has pleasures independent of it, in the brightness and excellence of which all others are dim, and in the enjoyment of which the loss of others is unregretted.

Superiority to natural and temporal evil is not the chief purpose of the gospel, and yet it is a common thing in the New Testament to declare that the disciples shall be delivered from it, and unaffected by it. Our Lord, for example, commands his followers not to be anxious concerning their food and clothing, or the evils of poverty, nakedness, and want; promising that, if they seek the kingdom of God and its righteousness, all needful good will be added thereto —

which is certainly a promise of deliverance from these temporal evils. So, also, he promises that "every one who hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life." Here, too, is a large promise of deliverance from temporal evil. What was intended by these promises? That they should actually never suffer want, but live in abundance; that they should actually receive a hundred fold more of houses and lands, and other possessions? No one supposes it. What, then, did our Lord mean? We may ascertain this point by inquiring why such possessions are so desirable, and why to be deprived of them is such an evil. The single reason is, that they are esteemed necessary to happiness. If, then, a man can be just as happy without them, it is no longer an evil to him to be deprived of them. If the want of them do not make him unhappy, it is not an evil to him to want them. The want of luxury and ease is no evil to the contented peasant, who has always lived in exposure, hardship, and labor, though it would be insufferable to the nobleman, who has been accustomed to fare sumptuously every day. So, likewise, if one receive a full and fair equivalent for the good of which he is deprived, he does not regard that privation as an evil. The enthusiast, who abandons fortune, prosperity, and friends, for the solitude and devotion of a monastery, conceives himself to have received a full equivalent for his sacrifice, and it is therefore to him no evil. And let a man's privations be what they may, to him they are no calamity, so long as he feels that they are fully compensated to him.

It is on this principle, and through the compensating power of faith, that we are enabled to understand our Lord's promises respecting temporal evils. He does not mean that his followers shall receive a hundred fold in *kind*,

but in *happiness;* that is to say, they shall find that the happiness and hope of true religion are more than a balance for their sufferings and privations; so that they would a hundred times rather endure these than relinquish their profession in order to be free from them. This is perfectly obvious and true — as true now as when it was uttered by our Lord. Why do we desire worldly good, and flee worldly evil? Because we desire happiness. But if religion warrants to us happiness independent of worldly good, and in spite of worldly evil, then we have what we desire; then our faith overcomes the world. That it does this, there are "clouds of witnesses" — the apostles and martyrs, who endured all things, and in the midst of all "sang praise to God;" and humbler Christians, in the depths of poverty and distress, yet cheerful, content, and rejoicing; men, injured, threatened, persecuted, yet patient, serene, and uncomplaining, while they can appeal to Him who judges righteously; men, lingering in painful sickness, cut off from the engagements of life, their prospects blasted, their hopes disappointed, their props torn away, yet not cast down nor dismayed; but finding in the power of faith and heavenly hope a compensation for their trials, and a victory over the world.

Equally complete is their triumph over spiritual evil. They walk amid the deceitful disguises and fatal ambushes of sin, unseduced and unharmed. Though the passions within ally themselves to the solicitations without, and war against their souls; though the constitution of their bodily frame, and the temper of their mind, the circumstances in which they are thrown, the company which they frequent, and the cares which occupy them, all combine to introduce some disorder into their spirits, to allure or surprise them to what is wrong, and to array them, even against their wills,

in disobedience to God; yet, over this fearful combination, against which unassisted man might combat in vain, these men of faith triumph. "God hath given them the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Faith, where its dominion is established in the soul, acts like some superior charm, to quell the inferior nature, and awe the rebellious passions to submission. It brings up to them the image of the glorious Master to whom they are bound; of the holy God, who is watching that he may judge them; of the future world, whose inheritance depends on their purity; and of all the misery and horrors, which follow in the train of unsubjected passion and voluntary sin. These press upon their minds with united and intuitive operation, and with the spontaneous indignation of the patriarch they put the temptation to flight with the cry, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

We perceive, then, the power of faith. It is a practical principle, resting on the basis of a simple truth. It is a moral principle, swaying the affections and will; not barely a conviction of the understanding, but a feeling persuasion, an unwrought sentiment of the heart. It is confidence, trust, reliance, on one who has divine authority, and on whom it is infinitely for our interest to lean. It excludes from the mind the power of inferior principles and motives, and fortifies it against the attacks of external calamity.

We may learn from this, my brethren, how to try and prove our own faith, and when to be satisfied with it. We may learn not to estimate its value by the number of propositions of which it is compounded, but by the spirit with which we embrace it, and the power it exercises over us. The question is not, "Do we lay stress on a multitude of fundamental articles? Are we skilful to discriminate the shades of difference between error and truth upon subjects

of intricacy and controversy? Do we love to be occupied in mysterious musings, and to be involved in contemplation of deep and perplexing inquiries?" These are not the marks of a saving faith. But the question rather is, "Have we acknowledged *Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God*, so heartily, that he is really and habitually our MASTER, and that his authority rules and controls us in all things? so that this faith works by love, purifies our hearts, and overcomes the world? Is it the parent of holy desires, pure dispositions, good living, and earnest aspirations after the excellence and bliss of heaven?" It is for these qualities that faith is valuable. It is by these that it works out our salvation. It is this efficacy in reforming, purifying, elevating, spiritualizing the human character, that constitutes the glory of the gospel. When it has done this, it has accomplished its great work. If it be doing this for us, we may be satisfied that our faith is neither fatally erroneous nor weak. But if it be pure as that of angels, and yet do not display this moral power, it is no better than "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal."

SERMON IV.

JESUS THE MEDIATOR.

1 TIMOTHY II. 5.

FOR THERE IS ONE GOD, AND ONE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MEN, THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.

THERE are few passages of Scripture in which a doctrine is expressed more distinctly and unequivocally than in this. It states, in terms which do not admit of misconstruction, the great fundamental article of all religion, that there is "one God;" and the prime truth of revealed religion, that there is "one Mediator between God and men." It speaks of them as separate beings, distinct in nature, diverse in office, and not to be confounded together. It intimates no mysterious union of natures, by which the Mediator is God as well as man, and the supreme Deity is mediator between himself and his creatures; but simply declares the plain, intelligible facts, that "there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

The apostle is thought to be referring, in these words, to the opinions of the Jews, to whose notions and feelings there is frequent tacit allusion in all his writings. They prided themselves in their ancient claim to be God's people; they fancied him to be exclusively their God, and the privi-

leges of revelation to be confined to themselves. But the apostle, in the preceding verses, tells them, no — "God will have *all* to be saved," Gentiles as well as Jews, "and come to the knowledge of the truth;" and then adds in our text, that to Gentile, as well as Jew, there is but one and the same God, and to all alike one and the same Mediator. All preference and distinction is now done away, and the chosen descendants of Israel have no longer any privileges above their brethren of other nations.

But we have less concern with this allusion of the apostle than with the great truth which he inculcates. To the whole family of man there is but one God — a truth once strange and heretical, though to our minds so familiar. However separated into tribes, however distinct in history, character, and manners; however cast asunder by the physical boundaries of the globe, or the artificial barriers of society; however divided by interest or policy, or alienated by traditionary enmity; still the bond of nature connects them together; they have one Father, and one God hath created them. "He hath formed of one blood all that dwell upon the face of the earth, and hath appointed the bounds of their habitation." They have not, indeed, recognized this common and universal Sovereign, but have bestowed upon others the honors due to him alone. Superstition and folly have multiplied the objects of adoration, and peopled heaven, and earth, and sea, with peculiar divinities. They have sometimes bowed down to the host of heaven, and sometimes to the monsters of earth, and sometimes to the workmanship of their own hands, and have warily divided their worship between rival gods. But amidst the whole may be heard the invariable testimony of nature, that the true object of all adoration is but One — one, infinite, independent mind; the origin and cause, the

support and end, of all other beings and all other things. He that fashioned the resplendent heavens, and rolled abroad their glorious and countless worlds of light, — who moulded the beautiful earth, and cast forth the waters of the wonderful sea, and peopled all with their innumerable tribes, infinitely diversified in structure, in powers, and in happiness, — is One, and one only. "Though there be that are called gods, whether in earth or in heaven, — as there are gods many and lords many, — yet to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him."

This doctrine of the divine unity is essential to true religion. Erring in this, the pagan nations have strayed alike from truth and from morality in their religion, and been lost in the most debasing corruptions, and the most mischievous superstitions. And it is not strange that it should have been so; for the moral character of the religion and of the worshipers will be conformed to that of the object of worship; and where these are numerous, some of them must be bad. So long as but one infinite object of worship is acknowledged, right reason will teach that he must be all present and all perfect; but where divinities are multiplied, as they cannot all be perfect, nor all exercise the same jurisdiction, their varieties of imperfection will of course give countenance to varieties of vice, and a crowd of gods afford shelter to a crowd of sins. So it has proved in the history of the world; vice and profligacy, irreligion and impiety, have increased with the multiplication of objects of religious homage. Among the chosen people, corruption and immorality crept in with the introduction of subordinate divinities; and all the vices, which in so great measure destroyed their religious character, and made nugatory the power of their religious law, may be traced to the demoralizing influence of idolatry.

Let us, then, see to it that we be not led, under any form, or any pretence, to depart from this great principle. It has ever been found the only true basis of piety, the only sufficient security of virtue. "Beware lest any man spoil you of this, by philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Be jealous over this with a godly jealousy; remembering that the first of all the commandments is ushered in with the proclamation, "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord!" and that our Master, in solemn prayer, has made the declaration, "This is life eternal, to know *thee, the only true God,* and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

And who is Jesus Christ, whom God has sent?

The doctrine concerning him is expressed in the other clause of our text — "and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

Observe here the truth of that divine saying, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." Men have imagined that they could not sufficiently multiply the objects of religious adoration. But in the simplicity of that mighty universe, which man's imagination cannot grasp, there is but one such object. Men have fancied that they could not interpose too many friends and advocates between their insignificance and the high majesty of heaven; they have crowded the access with numberless mediators to solicit benediction for them, and have filled churches, and altars, and cloisters with the images of saints who might pray for them, until the face of the great Supreme has been hidden, and their dependence on him has been forgotten. But the simplicity of God's government rejects this crowd of suitors, whom man would thrust forward to shelter his weakness, and appoints ONE

Mediator between himself and his offspring — one, to be the medium of his communications to them, and of their approaches to him. There is One on the throne, and One before the throne. When the supplicant draws nigh, his devotion is neither doubtful nor distracted. He knows that there is but One to be addressed; he feels that there is but One by whom he may obtain access; and his soul is absorbed in a single, undivided act of trust and praise.

The title of Mediator is in four several passages ascribed to Jesus in the New Testament. In order to understand clearly its import, we must consider that a *mediator* is one who acts *between* two persons or parties. He is the MEDIUM between them, the medium of intercourse or communication. And as such a one, among men, is needed, — not in the ordinary current of affairs, but on occasions of difference or dissension, — it has happened that the name is most usually given in the sense of a *peace-maker*, or one who effects reconciliation. In this sense it is doubtless applicable to our Lord; for one important object of his mission and religion is, to reconcile men to God; that is, to render them his friends by doing away their dislike to his holy law, and uniting them to him in love and obedience. Hence God is said "to be in Christ reconciling the world to himself." And to this end it is written, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, and, having made peace by the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself."

It is not, however, in this sense only, but in a more extended sense, that we are to understand this title, as indicating, not only one who makes peace, but one who, in a general sense, is *the medium of communication between* God and men. This is the meaning which the word bears in the New Testament. Thus Paul says, speaking of the

law, (Gal. iii. 19,) "It was ordained by angels, in the hand of a mediator." What is meant by Moses being thus called the mediator of the law, may be learned from his own language in speaking of the same transaction, (Deut. v. 5,) "I stood *between* the Lord and you at that time, to *show you the word* of the Lord." * In this instance the name is manifestly given him, not in the restricted sense of a peacemaker, but in that of his being the medium of communication. In no other sense is it applied to Moses.

It is obviously in the same sense applied to Christ in the epistle to the Hebrews, (viii. 6,) where he is styled "the Mediator of a better covenant, established upon better promises," than that of Moses. Now, as Moses was mediator of the ancient covenant, inasmuch as through him it was communicated to the people, it must be in the same sense that Jesus is called the "Mediator of a better covenant."

This example serves to define and settle the term in its application to our Lord, and teaches us how to understand it in the other passages in which it occurs. Thus, when the apostle contrasts the mildness of the new dispensation with the terrors which accompanied the introduction of the old, (Heb. xii. 24,) he mentions "Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant," evidently as the chosen messenger of love by whom it was brought.

In the same sense we are to understand him, (Heb. ix. 15,) where he speaks of the Mediator as having died that he might certify the new covenant, and render it "of force;" as all testaments, he adds, are required to be ratified with blood. So also are we to interpret the title in our text. It

* Hoc est, Eram vester μησιτης, interpres, internuncius, Dei ad vos legatus. *Schulz, in loc.*

has pleased God to have intercourse with his creatures, to establish with them a covenant, and pledge to them his promises. He, through whose instrumentality this is done, is for that reason called "the Mediator between God and men." "The law came by Moses," who was thus mediator of the old covenant; "but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," who was thus mediator of the new. By the same channel of mediation God has also appointed that his offspring shall have access to him, through him "come to the Father," and "in his name" address their praises and supplications. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

There are thus two divisions under which the office of mediator presents itself; the one as bringing down to men the messages of God, the other as bearing up to God the offerings of men.

In regard to the first, it has been well observed by a profound and celebrated writer, that the whole system of the divine administration toward man is a system of mediation; and that the mediatorial office of Christ is therefore analogous to the whole economy of the divine dispensations. "The visible government which God exercises over the world is by the instrumentality and mediation of others."

"We find by experience that God does appoint mediators to be the instruments of good and evil to us, the instruments of his judgment and his mercy." * As far as we can observe, this method is universal. He rules his creatures, not by speaking to them with his own voice, not by touching them with his own finger, but through the medium of other beings and inferior agents. Men are created, not by an express and direct exertion of the forming power, but are

* Butler's Analogy, Part II. chap. 5.

brought into being through the medium of parents. Life is supported, not by the immediate energy of the Almighty, but by the subordinate provisions of labor and food; and this food is sent not directly from God, like the manna in the desert, but by the circuitous operation of sunshine and rain, and a multitude of established natural causes. When he would bless, he raises up human benefactors; when he would rebuke, he rouses human enemies. He bestowed his favors on Israel through the ministry of Moses, Joshua, David, and Cyrus; he inflicted punishment for their crimes by the hands of the Philistines, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Romans.

When, therefore, we are told that, in the affairs of salvation, there is a "Mediator between God and men," we are taught what is perfectly coincident with the uniform method of divine procedure; we behold "a beautiful analogy, in a very considerable and important point, between the settled method of God's natural providence and the extraordinary operations of his grace." * As in the natural so in the spiritual world, we discern the agency of God only through the action of second causes. We behold his glory, not in its own essential refulgence, but "in the face of Jesus Christ." We receive "all spiritual blessings in heavenly things," through Christ; through him "come grace and truth;" through him "is the kindness of God toward us;" through him is "repentance and the remission of sins," "peace with God," and "the gift of eternal life." In a word, whatever we have received, pertaining to life and godliness, is derived to us from God through him. It is he, coming from God, who has taught us all that we know, and made certain all that we hope. Except in him, we have no

* James Foster.

provision of light and strength, no secure principle of virtue, no assurance of clemency and grace. The communications of God are the foundation on which we rest; and they have been made through the mediation of his Son.

The second division of this doctrine implies that Christ is also the channel through which men are to hold intercourse with God. "As all the distinguishing spiritual benefits which we enjoy have been conferred upon us through Christ, so our services and sacrifices, which we are enabled to perform and offer, should be presented to God the Father in and through him." * It was his direction to the apostles, that they should ask "in his name." The apostles enjoined it on the churches to approach God in praise and prayer, in thanksgiving and confession, "through him," "by him," and "in his name." The injunction has ever been observed; and the constant devotions of believers ascend to God through Jesus Christ. They come to the mercy-seat, not in their own name, but in that of the Mediator, and hope to be heard because they come through him.

As this is the prescribed and familiar form of prayer, it is important to understand what is intended by it; since, if we would have it done acceptably, it must be done intelligently. Let us inquire, therefore, what is implied in praying "through Christ," or "in the name of Christ."

It is not intended, we may first of all remark, that we are not to come to God directly, and address him personally; but quite the contrary. "Ye shall ask *me* nothing," said our Lord; "but whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." The express doctrine of his religion is, that men shall address the Father, and the Father only. And therefore the offering of prayers through

* Lardner's Sermon on John xvi. 24.

Christ cannot be understood to mean that they are first to be presented to him, and by him presented to God. All the precepts and examples of Scripture direct us to God himself, personally; and the phrase in question, as we shall presently see, bears a meaning which does not contradict them.

Neither are we to understand it as forbidding all acts of worship in which this form of words is not used. For we have repeated instances of both ascriptions and supplications by the apostles, in which this form does not appear.

It is the principle on which our devotions are framed, and the spirit in which they are uttered, rather than any verbal or formal exactness, which these scriptural directions enjoin. The sacred writers express little solicitude about the mere form of prayer.

Neither are we to understand, by prayer through Christ, that we are to ask to have our desires granted "for the sake of Christ;" for this is an expression without authority or warrant in the holy volume. The expression is once found in our version in connection with the forgiveness of sins, which God is said to have granted "for Christ's sake." This, however, is an acknowledged mistranslation of the original word. It should be, as in all other passages relating to this subject, *in* or *through* Christ.* To ask in prayer *for Christ's sake*, is without example or authority in the sacred writings, and is a very different thing from asking *through* Christ.

In what sense, then, is this form of words to be understood?

A little examination will satisfy us that it is in this: We are to pray as the disciples of Christ, guided by faith in

* Eph. iv. 32, εν Χριστω.

him, and influenced by the devout dispositions which he requires; "through him," because through the directions he has given for acceptable prayer, and the encouragement he has offered to sincere worshipers; "in his name," because by his authority, confiding in his warrant, commanded and invited by him, members of that family which he has brought nigh to God, and given access to the throne.

That this is the general sense of these expressions, will be rendered obvious by observing how they are used in other instances.

The Levites blessed the people, and Israel went out to battle, "in the name of the Lord;" that is, very evidently, by his authority and direction, by faith in him. The prophets spake "in the name of the Lord;" and our Savior says, "I am come in my Father's name;" plainly meaning, by his authority and direction, receiving from him their commission. So the apostles preached and wrought miracles "in the name of Jesus;" by his authority, under his commission, by faith in him. So they commanded the believers "to do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus;" that is, in compliance with his authority, and conformably to the spirit of his religion. To pray "in his name," is one of the things they were to do, and must have a similar interpretation. It is to pray by his authority, according to his instructions, by faith in him, in the character and with the spirit of his disciples.

It is not uncommon in the Scriptures to use the name of a person for his doctrine or religion. Thus it is said, "Moses is preached every Sabbath day;" meaning the religion of Moses. "We preach Christ," meaning the religion of Christ. We are said "to put on Christ," "to be in Christ," "to profess Christ," and a multitude of similar

phrases; by which is intended that we are to embrace, to adopt, to profess, the *religion* of Christ. So, also, in the instance of prayer *through Christ*, we may understand *through his religion*, or doctrine; since it is entirely through the influence of his religion, its instructions, directions, encouragements, and promises, that we are enabled to worship God acceptably. It is these which prepare our minds, and lead us to the mercy-seat. We approach, because the instructions which Jesus has given, and on which our faith relies, guide us thither; that is to say, as before, we come *as his disciples, under his authority, and by faith in him.* It is this coming in the character of his disciples which gives us hope that we shall be heard; and this hope or expectation is well founded, just in proportion as we are truly his disciples, and pray fervently in his faith. There is no charm in the words, no talisman in the forms we utter, no mysterious efficacy by which they force their way upward, from whatever heart they may rise. We might as well pray in the name of Mahomet, as in that of Christ, if we do not pray as disciples of Christ — not nominally and outwardly, but heartily and consistently, as his disciples. It is in this circumstance that we are to trust, and not in the belief that Jesus seconds every prayer, and carries it to the Father. For he expressly says, "Ye shall ask in my name; and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you;" that is, it is not from this circumstance that you are to take encouragement; you are not to depend for acceptance on my intercession; — and he adds, "For my Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." Here he states availing prayer in his name to be that which comes from those who love him, and have faith in him; that is, from his disciples; not

that which trusts for acceptance to his interposition only; for fully as that intercession may be offered for the faithful, it is nowhere promised to the insincere. So also says the apostle John, "Whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight;" which likewise conducts us to the same conclusion — that prayer, in the consistent character of disciples, is that prayer in his name which meets acceptance and blessing.

In this sense it is that the mediation of Christ opens the way of access to God. And in this doctrine, as there is evidently an admonition for the presumptuous, so there is encouragement for the humble and distrustful. For how abundantly have the instructions, the aids, the invitations of a kind and compassionate God been spread forth, to make the way to his mercy-seat accessible and free, and to remove all impediments which might obstruct or alarm. How graciously has the Mediator toiled, how earnestly entreated, how willingly suffered, that the path of promise might not be hidden, and that none of God's offspring might leave the way of life for lack of a cheering voice or an assisting arm! So eminently is the gospel a system of grace! And O, with what devout gratitude should we contemplate this evidence of it! Weak, ignorant, sinful, in our best desires and purest offerings, and therefore oftentimes dreading to approach directly to Him who is infinitely pure, and "cannot look on sin," how consoling is it to know, that there is one to offer encouragement and hope, and lead us tenderly by the hand to our Father's feet; one who himself has shared our infirmities, and can therefore pity them; who has himself borne our weakness, and endured temptations, though without sin; and who, gentle and forbearing, "breaks not

the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax," and utters no accents to the humble and believing, but those of encouragement and peace!

Brethren, let us remember this in our prayers; let us be imboldened and consoled by it in our apprehensions and despondency. "Seeing that we have this great High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession, and come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

SERMON V.

JESUS THE SAVIOR.

MATTHEW I. 21.

AND THOU SHALT CALL HIS NAME JESUS; FOR HE SHALL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS.

It was a custom among the Israelites, of which frequent examples are recorded in their sacred books, to bestow upon their children significant names, intimating either the feelings of the parent, or the circumstances of the birth, or the character and destiny of the offspring. Such are all the names in the patriarchal history; some of which, as those of Israel and Sarah, were changed in commemoration of some epoch in their lives, or to mark their altered fortunes. It is further observable, respecting this custom, that the name was often framed by a combination of one of the names of God. Thus Isaiah means *the salvation of the Lord;* Elisha, *salvation of God;* Elijah, *God the Lord,* or *the strong Lord;* Elihu, *he is my God himself;* Lemuel, *God with them;* and a child, given as a pledge of deliverance to Judah in the reign of Ahaz, was called Immanuel, that is, *God with us.* As this prophecy was also applied to the Messiah, he is on that occasion once called *Immanuel;* intimating that, by his residence among men, the presence

of God would be particularly manifest. There can be no ground, then, for the opinion, that this name implies a divine nature in Jesus, as if the very God, literally and personally, came to abide with us. For, as we see, this application of the name of God to men was a common thing; and if Christ's being once called *Immanuel* could argue that he was truly God, a man's being always called *Elijah*, *Elihu*, or *Lemuel*, would no less certainly prove *him* to be truly God. It was in his case, as in the others, a significant name, and not an assertion of personal divinity.

The name *Jesus* is also one of appropriate significancy. It means *Savior*. It intimates the deliverance which he was sent to accomplish. It designates the sense in which he was to bless the world. Thus his very name is a memorial of his office; so that we cannot speak of him without being reminded both of the honor which he had from God, and the blessing which he brought to men. We call him Christ, *the anointed of God;* Jesus, *the Savior of men.*

It is in the character of a Savior that we are to consider him at this time; in doing which, we may follow the suggestion of our text, and inquire, under three heads,

1. Whom he is to save;
2. From what he is to save;
3. How he is to save;

Or, in other words, we shall speak of *the subjects*, *the nature*, and *the method* of the salvation which he came to effect.

1. We are to consider *whom he is to save.* Our text says, "He shall save *his people.*" Who are to be understood by this designation?

If we reflect for a moment on the circumstances under which the Messiah came, we shall perceive that the Jewish nation is primarily intended. This had been eminently dis-

tinguished as God's people, having enjoyed for ages the peculiar manifestations of his favor. Prophets from God had spoken of the time when his grace should visit them with yet higher glory, in a prince and deliverer of the house of David, whose splendid reign was always described in closest connection with their destinies. To them, accordingly, his mission was addressed. He came not to the Gentiles, but to the lost sheep of Israel. Among them, and for them, his personal labors were devoted. For them his prayers and tears were given to the last moment of his life. It was only when they had rejected his gospel with incurable obstinacy, that his apostles were directed to carry its message to other nations. "It was necessary," as Paul said, "that this word of God should first be spoken to them." It was therefore fitting that he should be announced as the Savior of "his people;" and this the rather, as their deliverance, which was the first object, shall be the final effect of his ministry. That alienated and broken family shall be brought back to its inheritance, and "all Israel be saved."

This, however, is not a sufficient answer to our inquiry; for salvation is not confined to this people. We accordingly find it written, that "he came to seek and to save that which was lost." Who are intended by this term? How lost? By what means, and in what way, lost? The answer is, lost in sin; strayed away from obedience and goodness; lost therefore to happiness. As the younger son, who departed from his father's house, and became a wretched vagabond in a strange land, is on that account described as "lost," so they who have forsaken God's paternal presence and service, and lived in thoughtless and vicious habits of disobedience, till the peace of virtue is gone, and the misery of sin overtakes them, are also said to be "lost." And how

truly said! lost to duty, and therefore to happiness! lost, their peace of mind, their serenity of conscience, honor, comfort, and hope; strangers to his presence who made them; rebels against his grace who loves them; and — if they will not arise and come to their Father, who is ready to welcome their returning and contrite steps — perishing with the famine of the soul, and lost forever. These are the objects of the Savior's compassionate search. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world *to save sinners*."

He is also said to be "the Savior of the world." For the world itself was lost. The knowledge and worship of the true God was gone from it. Men groped after the way of acceptance and truth, but could not find it. Religion, the true mistress of human virtue and happiness, had been thrust aside, and bloody Superstition and impure Idolatry reigned in her stead. "Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people," and sin and misery ruled triumphant over the world which God had formed for happiness and goodness. Then it was that "the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world" — sunk, as it was, in hopeless corruption, from which human wisdom had striven to raise it in vain. It was an object alone worthy of divine interposition. If mankind had been incorrupt in religion and morals, there had been no occasion for a special messenger from heaven, no necessity for his supernatural light, for his instructions in righteousness, for the motives to repentance which he furnished, for the solemn warnings which he published, for the holy promises which he proclaimed, for the offers of pardon which he brought. Men might have been ignorant and barbarous, and subjected to all the miseries of this transitory state; yet if they had been holy, worshipers of God, righteous among men, where could

have been the call for the labors and sacrifices of an ambassador of God? It was only because the world was lying in wickedness, and men were dead in trespasses and sins, that God sent forth his Son with the dispensation of truth and grace. And to whom was this dispensation addressed? To all that have need of it; to all that are "lost;" to "the world;" to all men. There is no exception, no limitation. The gracious proclamation speaks indiscriminately to all, and offers a rich, impartial, unbounded provision for the guidance and redemption of the world.

2. We were to consider, in the next place, the *nature of this salvation*, or *from what* Jesus is to save. "He shall save his people *from their sins*."

This is in perfect conformity with the remarks already made. The great root of evil and wretchedness is sin; and its prevalence is the only cause which renders a Savior necessary. Freedom from sin is freedom from all essential ill. With this, also, the language of Scripture strikingly corresponds. It represents salvation to consist in the removal of sin and its consequences, and the substitution in its place of holiness, with its happy consequences and lasting rewards. Jesus came "to put away sin;" "to give repentance and remission of sins;" "to bless in turning away every one from his iniquities;" "to redeem from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." This is the constant language of the New Testament, which no man can read without the persuasion that a moral regeneration, a deliverance from the power of sin, and perfection in purity and holiness, is the purpose to be effected by the gospel; that in this consists its salvation, commencing upon earth, and consummated in the glory and bliss of eternity.

A strict adherence to the language of the Scriptures on

this point will keep us from the error of imagining that the evil from which Jesus saves is the curse of man's original condition, the fearful destiny in which he is involved by nature. Now, it is not only perfectly inconceivable that a benevolent being should have subjected his creatures to such a miserable fate prior to their sinning, or even to their existing; but, which is more to the purpose, the sacred writers perpetually teach that the misery to be saved from is that of sin, not of natural condition; that the wrath to be escaped is that which visits their own transgressions, not that which awaits them because they are men, or to which they are naturally subjected. They speak of no evil prior to or greater than that of sin. They speak of no curse antecedent to this, or independent of it. And they propose to save from this as the grand, the essential, the all-comprehensive ill, leading to infinite consequences of wretchedness and despair.

We are very ready to suppose that the work of redemption is some expedient for getting rid of the *punishment* due to sin — as if that were of all things the most to be desired; and thence we are easily led to persuade ourselves that we may so take advantage of the work which has been wrought as to escape the punishment, though we may not have relinquished the sin. Thus, to avoid the penalty, and yet enjoy the transgression, has always been a chief object of false religions; and men would fain believe that it has been accomplished in the true. But let us not be deceived. No such preposterous compromise has been made. It is inconsistent with all that we have been taught, either by experience or religion. For what says experience? The penalty of sin often continues to visit the sinner long after he has repented and reformed. The impiety, indiscretion, and vices of youth, for example, are followed with suffering

and shame through life, and burden the memory with bitter thoughts as long as reflection lives. But it would not be so if the grand design were simply to provide an escape from punishment, or to devise some means of abolishing it. In this case, all such suffering must have been done away at once. Let us not, then, be deceived. Even the assurance of pardon is no assurance that the consequences of transgression shall be altogether removed. For what says the Scripture? "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance on their iniquities."

And if we inquire of religion, as taught either by nature or by revelation, what is it, in strict truth, which God designs especially to promote by his government and his dispensations? Happiness? Yes, unquestionably. But how? Happiness only? at any rate? of any description? If so, there were no need of laws and restraints, and moral means, and institutions of discipline and instruction; for he might by the arbitrary appointments of his will lavish it abundantly on his creatures. But surely it is not so. Being a holy God, whose abhorrence of sin is equal to his desire of happiness, and in whose view there is no true happiness where there is not holiness, he, therefore, makes holiness the primary object of his government, and the moral perfection of his offspring the favorite purpose of his dispensations. Nothing will answer in the place of this. He cannot be satisfied by some plausible device for remitting punishment, nor by shifting it off upon some other than the transgressor, nor even by arbitrarily excluding all suffering from his universe. It is not suffering, but sin, which he would exterminate; he could esteem no salvation accomplished for his children, until this principle of all evil is itself utterly eradicated.

Let us not, then, be deceived in regard to the nature of

this salvation. It is not the abolition of punishment, but of sin. As when a man is saved from a disease, it is by removing the disease, — that is, by curing him of it, — so he is saved from his sins by being rid of them. It would avail little to deliver the sick man from his pangs, if his disorder were still unrelieved, and bearing him down imperceptibly to the grave; and it would avail little to deliver the sinner from punishment, and the sufferings which follow in the train of vice, if his evil dispositions were left unrebuked; for while he remains a moral being, he may choose for himself what happiness he pleases; yet if he cannot relish that of virtue, he will find no content. Let his fetters be stricken off, let the fire be quenched, and the gnawing worm be dead; open to him the rich paradise of heaven, and give him place among the obedient and holy worshipers around the throne of God; yet if he have not been redeemed from sin, nor his affections reclaimed from its love, there is no beauty nor bliss for him there; but he wanders among them a discontented stranger, self-tormenting and solitary, without companion, enjoyment, or home; his depraved habits and corrupted taste rendering insipid and loathsome the light and felicity of eternity.

3. We were to consider, in the third place, *the manner in which this salvation is effected;* or *how* Jesus saves from sin.

The main point to be insisted upon under this head is, that the character of the means must be conformable to that of the end to be gained. The end to be gained, as we have just seen, is a moral salvation. Our Lord must consequently have employed moral means. The misery from which man is to be delivered, originates in and depends upon the wrong state of his mind and affections. It is to be removed, it can be removed, by no arbitrary appoint-

ments of place or condition, by no exertion of absolute power, like the striking off of chains at a blow. It can be only by the operation of spiritual and moral remedies, suited to the spiritual and moral malady, which shall act gradually on the spirit, and restore it to health, vigor, and virtue.

The Christian dispensation is a provision of means for the regeneration of free, intelligent, voluntary agents, existing in a state of probation. Now, it is essential to the nature of such beings, in such a state, that they be subjected to a moral government, and be influenced through a moral process. If it were otherwise, then He who desires the salvation of all, and has evinced that desire by the costly apparatus of his dispensations from the beginning of the world, need only to have spoken the word, and all would have been changed at once into holy and happy beings. But this has not been done, because it would be inconsistent with their very nature; would defeat the very purpose of probation; would put an end to their moral agency, and convert them into merely mechanical instruments, incapable of either choosing or attaining virtue. Designing, therefore, to treat them agreeably to the nature which he has bestowed upon them, and which he would not change nor contradict, he has instituted corresponding means of salvation. He has not sent his Son to touch them with a wand, to re-create them by some inexplicable and unparticipated operation, like a spell or charm; but to "sanctify them through the truth," to "justify them through faith," to regenerate them "by the word of God."

It is plain, then, that there is nothing either arbitrary or compulsory in the gospel dispensation. Salvation is offered to men, but not forced upon them. It is left to depend upon the use which is made of those privileges and aids

which the grace of God has bestowed. It is thus entirely conditional. It is dependent on every man's free choice. If he will go into the ark, lo, it is open, and there is room enough; but he is not compelled to go in. The waters of life flow by him in copious and inviting streams; if he will come and take them, he shall live forever; but let him act his own pleasure; there is no constraint. The table of heaven is spread, and urgent invitations are sent abroad, and a joyous welcome awaits those who will be guests. But it rests with themselves to accept or refuse. Jesus has thrown wide the doors of everlasting day, and poured a strong light on the true path of peace. He has placed himself at its entrance, to invite, and urge, and warn men — by their allegiance to God, by the miseries of their present condition, by the welfare of their souls, by the inconceivable glories of heaven — to pursue the way of holiness and life. He has offered them guidance, direction, aid, and blessing. They need but come to him, and they shall have life.

It is thus that salvation is by grace. Grace *provides the means.* Sinful and undeserving man, by an act of essential benignity, by the unmerited favor of divine love, is put in the condition to escape from sin, and reach the bliss of heaven. It is a general provision for the human race; not a plan for the recovery of a selected few, nor a favor bestowed upon individuals; but an impartial offer of mercy to all — which offer having been made, and the opportunity having been given, each one is then, separately, to "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling." The grace of God makes the most ample and munificent provision, even, as it were, the wings of an angel for his flight upward; but if he will not stretch them and rise, it sends down no chariot of fire to bear away his reluctant soul.

I do not know that this portion of the subject needs further illustration; but we may readily find it by recurring to the history of the Old Testament. The expressions which are applied to the Christian salvation were also applied to the deliverance of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. They were said to be "redeemed" and "saved," and the name given to their leader into Canaan was that of *Savior*. *Joshua* is the same name as *Jesus*. Now that people were "saved" and "redeemed" through the miraculous means of salvation which God with a strong hand brought to them, and by their using those means according to his commandments. He redeemed them, not by literally paying any ransom to their masters, nor by providing substitutes in their stead, nor by offering in any way an equivalent for their service; but by opening for them a way of escape, through which they might pass to freedom and independence, and guiding them in it by his presence and power. So does he save us through Jesus Christ — by opening to us a free path of escape from sin and misery, and guiding and aiding us in it, through the perils of life, to our heavenly home. These cases illustrate one another. In each the gracious power of God opened the way and provided the means; and in each, man must walk in the way and use the means; else, instead of inheriting the blessing, he perishes in the wilderness.

But what are the means of salvation which Jesus has thus instituted? They are, in one word, the revelation which he has made of the doctrines and promises of true religion, and whatever provision exists for perpetuating and promoting its influence. Divine truth is the great instrument of regeneration and sanctification. Every circumstance in the communication of this which tends to insure its efficacy, is part of that great system of means by which Jesus

would operate for the redemption of man. The ministry and death of our Lord himself, the recorded word of the New Testament, the establishment of teachers and a church, the institutions of worship, preaching, and ordinances, the arguments which convince the understanding, the commandments which control the conduct, the motives which persuade the will and subdue the passions, the entreaties which move the affections, the warnings which assail the fears and the promises which elevate the hopes, all being adapted by a moral operation to lead men to faith, repentance, and holiness, are to be regarded as constituting a vast and universal system of means, which Christ was sent to establish, to maintain, and to superintend; which operates uniformly and uninterruptedly, like the sun, and air, and dew upon the natural creation; always active and fertilizing, but needing the coöperation of human labor for their complete and best effect.

The efficacy of these means is essentially promoted by their association with the personal labors and sufferings of Him who died to establish them among men. By that painful but voluntary death, he gave the most solemn proof of the infinite value of his work. He exhibited the most disinterested evidence of his own earnestness and love. He made the most affecting manifestation of the strength of the divine abhorrence of sin, and of the greatness of the divine compassion for man. It was thus provided, that, if any had been unaffected by his teaching, uninfluenced by his example, unmoved by the wonders of his life, and the holy tenderness and zeal with which he had devoted himself for them, they might at least be touched when they should see him pouring out his soul for them in death, and so be won by his cross. And with how many has it proved

sp! They have resisted all his teaching, persuasion, and entreaty; they have been able to see, without emotion, the beauty of his spotless life, and his laborious benevolence. But when they were brought to his cross, and saw that he was not only willing to teach and rule them, but with unparalleled love to die for them, they have been able to resist no longer. Their hard hearts have melted. Their proud spirits have yielded. In the moment of tenderness, they have abjured their sins, and resolved to live unto Him "who loved them and gave himself for them."

Is it thus that we have applied to ourselves the rich grace of the gospel? Have we thus felt the power of its motives and laws, and surrendered our souls to the influence of its holy and benevolent spirit? Have we experienced the worth of the doctrines and promises of a gracious Savior?

That we need all this, how can we be ignorant? Liable, as we are, to infirmity and temptation, subjected to evil passions, exposed to stray from duty, and God, and peace, in pursuing the concerns of the world, how much and how constantly do we need the instructions and sanctions of our divine Master, the encouragement of his promises, and the aid which he provides from above! If we listen to his awful and delightful revelations, and fill our hearts with a commanding and habitual sense of them, then the power of sin is weakened; its sceptre and chains are broken; we go forward in the light and liberty of the children of God. "The Son has made us free, and we are free indeed." But if, slighting these means of guidance and salvation, we seek to pass forward unsupported and alone, how serious is the danger that we shall be lost in error, overcome by temptation, corrupted by the world, and miserable in the end! For where is there security, except where Christ has pro-

vided it? Where is there "joy and peace," except "in believing"? And "how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

Is there any one, then, moved by such considerations, anxious for the welfare of his soul, and earnest to know what he shall do to be saved? Let him receive in answer the words of the apostle, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Every direction and every preparation is included in faith; for when you have gone with faith to the word of the Savior, you trust an infallible guide, who cannot lead you astray. A true faith and reliance on him will insure to you the right influence of the means he has provided, and the spiritual aid he has promised.

Do you ask, further, how you shall attain, cherish, cultivate this faith? Let it be answered, *By diligent and earnest attention to the means of religion.* Hope for no attainments, except you use the means for arriving at them. Least of all expect a powerful and ruling faith in Christ, without the most devoted use of the means which he has instituted. Be instant in prayer; be frequent in meditation; study the Scriptures; be punctual at the worship and ordinances of God's house; seek instruction from the works of pious men, and in the conversation of those who are themselves religious. Use these methods vigilantly and perseveringly. It is not the occasional use of them, *occasional* reading, meditation, and prayer, which will keep the heart right, or maintain the ascendency of religious principle. The habit is necessary. These things must be done customarily and constantly. For the principle of the religious affection, which rests ultimately in God, is like that of the child to its parents. And how is it that that affection, not in a few, but nearly, without exception, in all chil-

dren, is rendered so strong, lively, and permanent? The reason is, that the child is always with its parents, continually lives with them and speaks with them; knows and feels that it receives every thing from them; their image becomes inwoven with all its thoughts, affections, and plans, and makes part of its essential happiness. Any man that will take care to be thus always with God, to think of him, and to refer to him, and to make the messages of his love by Jesus Christ as familiar as a mother's accents of love to her child, may render his religious principle as strong and fervent. But the filial affection of the most devoted child in the land might be chilled and destroyed, if he kept himself as little acquainted with his parents as many men are with God. Learn wisdom from this example. Have not the folly to hope for the great end, except you devotedly pursue the prescribed means. It is these upon which God pours the blessing, and which shall guide us at last "through faith unto salvation."

SERMON VI.

JESUS THE HIGH PRIEST.

HEBREWS IX. 26.

BUT NOW, ONCE, IN THE END OF THE WORLD, HATH HE APPEARED TO PUT AWAY SIN BY THE SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF.

It is observable of the manner in which the apostles speak of our Lord, that they seem anxious to accumulate expressions which shall evince their admiration and devotion; and in order to excite in others the same sentiments, they take care to select such language and illustrations, as shall convey to their minds the most favorable impressions concerning his excellence and dignity. These are consequently varied according to the previous opinions and habits of those whom they address; since that illustration which should ascribe to him the highest honor in the opinion of one, might be associated in the mind of another with very opposite feelings. This is only saying, in other words, that they adapted themselves to the habits of thinking and state of mind of those whom they addressed. This is what Paul means when he says, "that he became all things to all men, that he might by all means save some." It was on this principle that he strove to win the attention of the Athenians, by representing the God whom he would preach to

them, not as a strange divinity, but as that "Unknown God" whom they already worshiped; and that he quoted to them, in corroboration of his doctrine, the words of "one of their own poets."

It is upon this principle, also, that the epistle to the Hebrews is written. It is designed to conciliate the Jews to the new religion, by exhibiting it in such lights, and under such illustrations, as would render it to them most effective. In order to this, the author institutes a parallel between some portions of the Mosaic and the Christian institutions. The Jews would seem to have felt it as an objection to the doctrines of our Lord, that they threatened the abolition of the ancient ceremonials; and many, who could hardly doubt that he was the Christ, were yet ready to regard it as a deficiency in his system, that it provided no splendid temple nor sanctuary, no sacrifices nor priests, like the venerable faith which had been communicated to their fathers. To meet this very natural feeling among his countrymen, the apostle explains to them, that these things may be considered as existing in the Christian no less than in the Jewish dispensation. Heaven is a temple, and that part of it which is accounted the peculiar residence of God may be called the sanctuary, or holy of holies. The death of Christ, considering its moral cause and purposes, may be deemed a sacrifice; and he himself, considering the design of his office, may be regarded as our high priest. And not only so, but it is a more splendid temple, a richer sacrifice, a greater high priest. He would thus make it appear that the Mosaic religion had no advantage over the Christian in respect to ordinances; that, in truth, it had possessed only the shadow, of which the substance is in the gospel. Under the first covenant there was a tabernacle magnificently furnished, which he describes; under the

second covenant there is "a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands." Into that the high priest entered with the blood of beasts; so did Christ into this with his own blood. Under that covenant the sign of cleansing and pardon was "the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean;" under this, it is the blood of Jesus Christ, "who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself to God." But the Jewish high priest offered for himself as well as for the people; Jesus is greater, who needs no offering for himself. The Jewish high priest offered every year; but Christ only "once, now, in the end of the world, hath appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

Upon the parallel thus instituted by the apostle two remarks may be made. First, it is observable, that, in addressing the Hebrews, nothing could be more natural, or more likely to attract their regard to the new faith. It was illustrating the high dignity of our Lord, and the purpose of his office, in a manner conformable to their previous religious associations and habits. It thus adapted itself to their sacred prejudices, and prepared the way for the gradual removal of them. And secondly, as it was a mode of illustrating our Lord's character and office peculiarly suited to them, so it is one which — with the exception of a few incidental allusions, and the occasional occurrence of sacrificial terms — is never used except in reference to them, nor by any writer except the author of this epistle. To other nations, indeed, not familiar with the religious persons and institutions of the Mosaic law, this mode of illustration is difficult to be appreciated. After the best explanations, it remains not a little obscure. This circumstance deserves to be considered, because it may convince us that the essence of our Lord's office does not consist in this form of representing

it; since if it did, it would be the general form, and, instead of being nearly confined to one epistle, would be in ordinary use among the apostles, and the title of *high priest* as familiar as that of *Savior*. Jesus himself could not have passed through his whole ministry without alluding to it, nor the apostles have been utterly silent respecting it in their preaching, as from the book of Acts they appear to have been. We owe to it some of the most interesting and affecting views of our Lord's offices; but they never would have been given in the same form to any of the *Gentile* Christians, and cannot, therefore, as regards the form, be essential to their right apprehension. Our object must be to ascertain the great and leading truth couched beneath these representations; to separate what is essential from what is accidental, and take the substance rather than the form.

In order to this, let us briefly examine the language of the epistle, and show what inferences should be drawn from it for the direction of our faith and affections.

The apostle represents our Lord as holding the same place in the Christian system which the high priest had maintained in the Jewish. He had already described him as sustaining the office of Mediator, like Moses in the previous dispensation; and now, that he may show how all honor is accumulated on him, and that he has a name above every name, he declares him to hold in the church forever that most sacred function, and high place of government, which had formerly passed from one to another in the family of Aaron.

The high priest was the chief religious personage, or, as we may say, the head of the ancient church. He possessed a dignity of office and a sacredness of person to which none else approached. He had the supreme charge over all holy

places, things, and services. He alone had permission to enter the most holy place, and that only on the most solemn occasion, and in the most imposing ceremony. To this high office there is no successor in the Christian church but Jesus Christ. He is the only rightful head, and such he continues forever.

The most remarkable circumstance in the duty of the high priest, to which especial reference is had in this epistle, was his entering once a year into the holy of holies, to make atonement for the sins of the people. In this he was distinguished from the other priests, who might offer other sacrifices in the outer court, but might not enter the holiest place, nor participate in that peculiar rite. Upon that occasion, he was first to make atonement for himself and his household, by burning incense before the mercy-seat, and sprinkling the blood of the bullock seven times upon it and before it. He was then to slay a goat as a sin-offering for the people, and in like manner to sprinkle the blood upon and before the mercy-seat, and make an atonement for the holy place, for the tabernacle, for the altar, and for the people. He was then to take another goat, and, laying his hands on its head, confess over it all the sins of the people, "putting them upon the head of the goat," and then send him away into the wilderness, "that he might bear away their sins into a land not inhabited." *

This is the scene to which particular allusion is made in what is here said of the high priest's office. The essential point upon which stress is laid — for we are not to seek a parallel in every minute detail — may be found expressed in the words of our text. The object of that service, like that of our Lord's ministry, was "to put away sin." The high

* Lev. xvi.

priest having entered the holiest place, with the blood of the sacrifice, put the sins of the people on the head of the goat, and sent them away. Jesus entered into heaven, says the apostle, with his own blood, and "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." The purpose is the same in both instances; and the means were so far similar, as that the shedding of blood is insisted upon in each. The inquiry therefore is suggested, In what sense are we to understand that sin is put away by the effusion of blood in sacrifices?

There are two senses in which sin may be said to be "put away." The first is the literal and absolute sense, when a man, having reformed and become righteous, is no longer a sinner. His sins are in the strictest sense put away, because in fact they no longer exist. The other is a figurative or ritual sense, when any one is, in certain circumstances, considered or treated as holy and free from sin, because of certain ritual formalities and conditions. In such case, sin is said to be "put away," because, in respect of ceremonial privileges and external religious advantages, the ill consequences and incapabilities of a sinful state are removed.

Now, it is clearly in the latter sense only that sins could be removed by the sacrifices of the Jewish law, and by the annual propitiation. By the sprinkling of blood on the mercy-seat, the people were not actually made righteous, nor were their sins truly carried away by the scape goat into the desert. It was wholly a ceremonial and emblematical scene. It was an appointed sign of ceremonial absolution. God, as the King of the people, had established this method of proclaiming, from year to year, that they should be treated as free from sin, and be still favored as his peculiar people. Not because by this act they became sinless, nor because their transgressions were sufficiently punished

in the sufferings of the bullock and the goats. For this same atonement was extended to the holy place, the altar, and the tabernacle. They were all purged by the same sacrifice, though they had been guilty of no sin. It could not therefore be designed as an actual purification of the people, but as emblematical merely. It could have no effect to change the mind of God in regard to them, or his dealings toward them; it could only manifest his propitious disposition, and proclaim his gracious forbearance.

Beneath all this, however, there was doubtless couched a moral meaning and a moral lesson. It was all combined with positive instructions concerning duty and the strongest prohibitions of vice. For the grosser sins no sacrifice was appointed; and none were availing, in any case, to actual pardon and acceptance, except the transgressor were penitent and reformed. The most explicit language on this point is frequent throughout the Old Testament. There was a spiritual meaning to these rites; but, like other acts of worship, they procured no spiritual blessings, except to the pious and obedient. To impress lessons of piety and obedience was one purpose of their institution; and this was very much effected by the character of clemency and readiness to forgive which they perpetually attributed to the Almighty; thus winning transgressors to repent, and encouraging the humble and distrustful to return to their duty. In this way a moral effect was the end at which they aimed, and which they had a tendency to produce. It was their final design, their legitimate result; leading, through the pomp and solemnity of an affecting and significant emblem, to contrition, and reformation, and the literal putting away of sin.

If we now turn to the office of the Christian high priest, we find that it was the whole purpose of his ministry, from

first to last, "to put away sin" in the strictest sense of the terms; to bring men to repentance, to produce reformation and virtue; thus to cause them to "be born again," to render them "new creatures," to make them "partakers of a divine nature." This was the great end of all which he did, and taught, and suffered. It was the purpose of all his doctrines. It was the object and tendency of all his precepts. It was the aim of the sanctions of his religion. It was the chosen work of his life; the work which he commissioned his apostles to carry on, and established his church to maintain, throughout all ages. And wherever the gospel has been preached, this has been its distinguishing and glorious triumph. It has abolished, or at least weakened, the empire of sin; has rescued men from its power, taught them to hate its influence, and led them to seek for happiness in driving it from them and cultivating the holy spirit of virtue.

What was thus the one great purpose to be accomplished by the Messiah, toward effecting which all his offices and every part of his labor combined, was also the purpose to be accomplished in his sacrifice as high priest. It is a moral purpose; designed "to put away sin," not ritually, figuratively; but literally, absolutely. Not by transfer of guilt, or substitution of another to suffer in place of the guilty, nor by any mystical spell which may change sin to innocence by a touch; but as a moral means, operating, like other moral means, through the senses and affections, by emotion, sympathy, admiration, fear, and love — persuading to penitence, devotion, and obedience. The death of Jesus, independent of his life, character, and labors, avails nothing; and connected with them, it operates as part of the great system of means which effects its purpose by a spiritual influence.

It is true that a similar influence is ascribed to the sacri-

of our Lord, as to the sacrifices of the Jewish law. what have we seen that to be? Not an actual, abso-, literal, cleansing from sin. This is nowhere pre-led. The whole authority of the prophets is against it voice of this epistle is against it. "It is not possible," ys, "that the blood of bulls and of goats should take y sin." It has no connection with sin, nor power over or influence over the divine mind in regard to it. Its acy consists in its being the appointed sign to men of divine clemency and grace. As the blood of the pass-lamb upon the door-posts was "a token" to the in-tants of the house, that they should be saved, so the d of all the sacrifices was a "token," or sign, that 's mercy was extended toward them. He had annexed this signification. And just so when he delivered his to death, it was for a *sign* — the most convincing and factory which could be given — of his inexhaustible y, of his willingness to forgive and save; a sign that, he did not spare his own Son, so he was ready with freely to give us all things." It was therefore well d a "sacrifice." It signified, what the Jewish sacrifices ified, that God, holy as he is, and abhorring all iniquity, t plenteous in redemption, and ready to forgive; that waiting to be gracious, and encourages his prodigal lren to return; that he is ready to enter with them into w covenant, and allow them henceforth a new opportu-of approving themselves to him.

uch is its resemblance to the sacrifices of the ancient mant — a resemblance which evidently does nothing to roy the moral nature of the influence it exerts. Those led in ritual blemishes by a positive ritual appointment; in regard to moral guilt, only by their power to impress nind, and move to penitence and holiness. And who

is not aware that precisely in this mode the blood of Jesus avails to the cleansing and salvation of man? Who pretends that it shall reconcile to God, except through the faith, repentance, and obedience which it produces? that it shall bring to him any heart which does not come with its own affections? any soul which does not surrender itself to his love and law? And who does not know that, in the impression of that scene, in the affecting and pathetic circumstances under which the Lord of glory was devoted to the cross, there is that which is peculiarly suited to touch the sensibility of the soul, to awaken the sleeping conscience, to rouse to admiration, wonder, and love, to gratitude, remorse, and repentance? Who can know that all this suffering was needful to establish the new dispensation of grace, and effect the removal of sin, and lead men to heaven, without being profoundly impressed with a sense of the evil of sin, and the riches of the divine compassion? Who, that allows himself to reflect and feel, can look unmoved on the token of his mercy which God has there given, or the sign of his grace which he has there displayed? It reminds him of the horrible evil of sin, which brought the Savior into the world to suffer and die; of the placability of the Father, who provides for the return and acceptance of his children, and "reconciles the world to himself, not imputing their transgressions to them;" and of the aggravated guilt which they must incur, who should harden their hearts against all this mercy, and continue in sin while grace thus abounds. He acknowledges the power of the cross; he bends before the persuasive entreaties of the Savior's sufferings, and turns to God with his whole heart. Herein is the power of the sacrifice — it has effectually put away his sins, and saved his soul.

That there is no other efficacy in our Lord's sufferings, except in the mode which has now been described, I do not

assert. But thus much is clear — that this is the only operation which we can understand, or with which we can perceive that man has any practical concern. In the mind and counsels of God, there may be consequences which we do not discern and cannot penetrate. An importance is plainly attributed to the Messiah's death in the Scriptures, which is ascribed to that of no other person. It is spoken of with peculiar emphasis and feeling, and is connected in a peculiar manner with the terms of pardon and life. We may, therefore, be certain that it holds a most important place in the Christian scheme; that we owe to it, perhaps, much more than we can at present know, far more than we can distinctly apprehend. But what we can apprehend, what we do understand, should be enough to satisfy us. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God;" it is not for us curiously to pry into them, nor should we perhaps be made better if we could discover them. What God has been pleased to reveal, is enough for our gratitude, guidance, and peace. True humility will be content with this, and not ambitiously seek to explain what the Scriptures have not explained. If we can discern the powerful moral operation by which our Lord's death convinces men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, and sanctifies their souls, it is enough, or more would have been told. Let us be content to rest in humble ignorance of whatever mysterious purposes may be otherwise effected, and fear lest our solicitude to know more should destroy the practical and saving influence of what is already certain.

But besides the view of our Lord's character as High Priest, which we have now taken, there is yet another, on which this epistle dwells with still stronger emphasis and pleasure; and that is, his personal character, as exhibiting, in its traits of benevolent sympathy and tenderness, a pledge of the placability and grace of God, and an encouragement

to the frailty and apprehensions of man. There are few portions of Scripture more delightful than these to the penitent, timorous, self-distrusting believer. The power of persuasive and pathetic language is almost exhausted in describing the compassion of our great High Priest, and in setting forth the comfort and animation which his example and sufferings should impart. Even the Jewish ritual had taught that God is not inexorable, but willing to forgive. But in the character and labors, the tenderness and sufferings, of Jesus, it is yet more touchingly exhibited. Here he invites us with a voice of kindness, and cheers us with the countenance of love. We may come no longer in abject fear and servile dread, "like slaves beneath the throne, but boldly;" "for we have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin; and having himself suffered, being tempted, is able to succor those who are tempted;" "who is able also to save those to the uttermost who come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

What shall we add to this language of the Scriptures? It speaks more plainly than we can express, and with an authority which we should not dare assume, of the abounding grace of God, as confirmed to us by the ministry and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us rejoice in it. Let us strive to be worthy of it. Let us surrender to it our faith, our trust, our affections. For where would be our apology or our hope, if, unmoved by this rich and wonderful abundance of invitation, compassion, and aid, we should suffer ourselves to be strangers to his love, aliens from his presence, rebels against his law! if we should be found capable of thus trampling under foot the Son of God, and doing despite to the spirit of grace, and counting the blood of the covenant, wherewith we are sanctified, an unholy thing!

SERMON VII.

THE ATONEMENT BY JESUS CHRIST.

ROMANS V. 11.

AND NOT ONLY SO, BUT WE ALSO JOY IN GOD, THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, BY WHOM WE HAVE NOW RECEIVED THE ATONEMENT.

THE apostle, in the preceding part of this epistle, has employed himself in showing that Jew, as well as Gentile, is to be saved by the grace of God; that, therefore, the boasting of the Jew in his law is vain; and that the Gentile cannot be required to conform to that law, in order to his admission to the Christian dispensation. In this he had reference to the great controversy of the age. The Jews, glorying in their exclusive privileges as the people of God, insisted that there could be no favor to the Gentiles, except through a previous initiation to their church. Paul, on the other hand, contended strenuously for the rights of the Gentiles, independently of the Mosaic institutions. He asserted that God was in Christ introducing a new dispensation of grace for all men, in which they might freely partake without first passing through the ceremonials of the former faith.

Having thus cut off from the Jews their favorite ground of boasting, and showed the title of the Gentile believers to be as good as theirs, the apostle begins the present chapter

with exhibiting the causes of rejoicing which pertain to the Gentile Christians.

The first is *the hope of glory*, to which the grace of God has introduced them, and to which they had been previously strangers. The second is, *their sufferings for the gospel's sake* — "we glory in tribulations also" — because they lead to increased attainments in the spirit and virtues of religion, and thus prepare the way for its peace and bliss. The third is their relation to God as their God; *we joy in God;* this they could not do formerly, as being Gentiles, who had not the true knowledge of God, and were not admitted to the privileges of his people; but now, being brought nigh in the establishment of the new covenant, "we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement."

It is the third ground of the believer's glorying, or joy, which forms the text of our discourse. In considering this, we find four topics of remark.

1. The meaning of the word *atonement*, as here used.
2. The persons who receive this atonement.
3. The mode in which it is received.
4. The joy occasioned by its reception.

1. We are to speak of the meaning of the word "atonement."

Here, it is to be observed, first of all, that this is the only place in the New Testament in which the word occurs. It is not again used in the Christian Scriptures by any writer, in any connection, in relation to any subject. It is never used in relation to the terms of pardon, or acceptance with God, to explain the ground of the sinner's hope, or to illustrate any of the works or offices of Christ; neither in relation to his life, his doctrines, his sufferings, or his death. This is a fact of which we should be thoroughly aware, that

the writers of the New Testament, throughout that volume, have never found occasion to introduce the word "atonement." We meet with it nowhere except in our text.

In the next place, it is to be remarked, that, as occurring in this passage, it is universally acknowledged to be a clear and unquestionable mistranslation of the original word. In every other case in which the same word occurs, it is rendered *reconciliation;* as when the apostle says, "He hath given unto us the ministry of reconciliation." So it should have been rendered here. Doddridge remarks, that it has so evident reference to the word *reconciled* in the context, that "it is surprising it should have been rendered by so different a word in our version." * Other commentators speak to the same effect.

A single glance at the connection in which the text stands will satisfy us that this interpretation is necessary to the sense of the passage; for there is an obvious allusion to the language of the verse immediately preceding. "If," says the apostle, "when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Then follows our text, in which he declares that those who are thus *reconciled,* "rejoice in God through Jesus Christ, by whom they have received *this reconciliation.*"

A glance at the word "atonement" itself may also convince us that the true meaning is *reconciliation.* The remark has been made, and may be profitably repeated,† that *to atone,* in its primary use, signified *to reconcile.* It is formed by the union of the two words *at* and *one.* Persons who have once differed, on being reconciled, are set *at one.*

* Family Expositor, *in loc.* note.

† See especially Dr. Ware's *Letters to Trinitarians and Calvinists,* Letter V. p. 95.

To put *at one*, or to *at-one*, is originally to *reconcile*; consequently *atonement* is *reconciliation*. This we know to have been the signification of the word as it was used at the period when our translation of the Bible was made; it was undoubtedly the meaning attached to it by the translators.

Let us remember, then, that the word "atonement," in the only instance in which it is found in the New Testament, is the same with "reconciliation." But what is to be understood by "reconciliation?"

To answer this will require few words; for it is the comprehensive term which expresses, in one view of the subject, the entire purpose of the Savior's mission. The world was estranged from God, worshiping false divinities, and pursuing evil practices. Its inhabitants had wandered from God, and were "aliens," "afar off." He sent his Son to bring them near; to acquaint them with his character; to restore them to their allegiance; to make them his friends; and thus, in one word, to reconcile them. Hence the apostle calls the ministry of the gospel the ministry of "reconciliation;" because "God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This he represents to be the burden of the message with which the preachers of the word are charged — "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

Thus much respecting the signification of this important word. We proceed to consider,

2. Who are said to receive the atonement.

The idea conveyed by this language of the sacred writers, is that of two parties at variance. There is an alienation between God and his people. A reconciliation is to take place. Which party is to receive it? Which party makes, and which receives, the offers of peace?

The answer to this will depend upon the reply to a previous question. Which party is at variance, which at enmity? Is God at variance with his children, or they with him? Has he forsaken them, or have they forsaken him? Is he the enemy of men, or are they the enemies of God? The reply to this question is ready upon every heart and tongue. God has never estranged himself from men, nor forsaken them, nor been their enemy. "He has hated nothing which he has made." His name is Love; and in long-suffering love he has forborne them and been patient with them, pitied them as a father his children, showered down mercy, and made punishment his strange work. The history of the world bears testimony that he has never ceased to be gracious, and that if there have been any separation between him and his human family, it has taken place on the part of his wayward offspring. They have neglected and forgotten him; they have been thankless and disobedient. They have disliked his law, been impatient beneath the restraint of his government, and unwilling to retain him in their knowledge. The alienation was entirely on their part; it is their enmity which is to be subdued and forgiven, and it is they, therefore, who are to receive the reconciliation.

With this statement the Scriptures perfectly accord. The aspect of all the dispensations is that of God's love. His infinite and unchangeable benignity, his free and unfailing mercy, shine conspicuously in all. They do not exhibit him as a stern avenger, an inexorable sovereign, a God of terror and wrath; but as gracious and merciful, plenteous in redemption, full of compassion — the enemy of sin, indeed, and sometimes displaying his indignant displeasure in works of severity and destruction; but long-suffering toward the guilty, and not desirous that any should perish. Notwithstanding the sins of man, he so *loved* the world, that he sent

his Son to save it. "He magnified his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He did not need to be rendered propitious, to be persuaded to extend favor to man; for he was already waiting to be gracious; the hand of forgiveness was already stretched out. It was men who needed to be induced to seek forgiveness. They had set themselves afar off, and needed to be persuaded to come near. And therefore the language of Scripture is, "God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself;" not himself to the world.

It is sometimes thought, that God receives the atonement; that it is a means used to reconcile him to the world, and to persuade or enable him to grant pardon and favor, which otherwise he might be indisposed or unable to bestow. But the uniform representation of Scripture certainly is, that this atonement flows from his grace, not that his grace is the consequence of the atonement; that he sent his Son to live and suffer for the salvation of men, not that the Son lived and suffered in order to win the good-will of God toward them. It would be dishonorable to our heavenly Father to suppose any other one to have more compassion than he, and to be the first in devising and prosecuting a plan for human redemption. The Scripture expressly speaks of reconciling men to God, never of reconciling God to men. Let us adhere to this important distinction. Let us receive with grateful emotions this plain statement of God's inherent and essential grace. Let us neither question it, by ascribing it to the previous labors of one more gracious than himself, nor abuse it by ungrateful continuance in rebellious sin.

3. The next observation to be drawn from our text relates to the mode in which this atonement, or reconciliation, is received — "through Jesus Christ." He is the medium through which are communicated all the purposes and

revelations of God. He is the messenger by whom are made known the kind purposes of the Father toward his children, and by whom is preached "peace to those who are afar off and to those who are nigh." He came, commissioned with all the authority and power, all the wisdom and holiness, that should be necessary to convince, and persuade, and win men to their allegiance to God. And by employing all these powers, by exercising all these gifts, by establishing a new dispensation, by his instructions, doctrine, and example, by his life and sufferings, his labors and death, — he did all that was needful to teach men the way of return, and lead them back to God.

Especially were the anguish and patience of his final sufferings, and his fearful death upon the cross, appointed and powerful means of affecting the souls of men, and restoring them to the love of duty and of God. To this portion of his ministration, therefore, the work of reconciliation is frequently attributed. "He died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." "He made peace by his cross." He thus exhibited the earnest desire of our heavenly Father to reclaim his wandering children to the ways of pleasantness and peace. He thus exhibited a spectacle which none can contemplate without emotion; which thousands have thought upon and wept — wept those tears of sorrow and contrition which have issued in repentance, and been led, humble and suppliant, to the footstool of God's mercy, and thence upward in the path to heaven. What multitudes have thus felt the power of this reconciling grace! They have cast the burden of their sins at the foot of the cross, and, in the strong figure of the Apocalypse, have "washed their garments, and made them white, in the blood of the Lamb."

4. We were to speak, lastly, of the joy or glorying occasioned by this doctrine in the mind of the believer.

Here let us go back, and observe the state of feeling in the apostle's own mind. He had been setting aside the boasting of the Jews in their peculiar privileges as God's chosen people, and proving that they had no reason to exclude or despise the Gentiles. And now, in the name of the Gentiles, he is bringing forward the grounds of *their* religious boasting. The select nation can no longer glory in God as their peculiar divinity. Once, indeed, it was so, and we Gentiles were aliens and strangers; but now we also are brought near, and called into his family; we also are partakers of his revealed religion, and the hope of his glory; we, therefore, as well as they, may "joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have *now* received reconciliation." The apostle was thinking of the general fact, which was so frequently the theme of his preaching and epistles, and to establish which he so anxiously labored; the fact that, in the gospel, the distinction between Jew and Gentile was abolished, the middle walls of partition thrown down, and all nations placed in a state of reconciliation — that general fact, to which most of the passages refer which speak of the world being reconciled and redeemed by the ministry and death of Jesus Christ. When the apostle contemplated this glorious truth, which evinced the equal and impartial mercy of the universal parent, no wonder that his heart was enlarged, and that he spake of it here and elsewhere in ardent accents of joy and triumph.

It should be equally matter of religious rejoicing to us. To see the diffusion of an impartial and universal religion, which gives one light and one hope to all the sons of men; which brings every nation, and kindred, and tongue, into an equal state of favor; which collects in one the family in heaven and on earth, and unites it under one name, — how shall we not triumph and rejoice in this great and sublime

truth, this mystery, as the apostle calls it, "which was kept secret since the world began, but is now made manifest to all nations"?

There is not only reason for joy in this general sense, but in a particular and personal sense. For by this gracious method of reconciliation we are, individually, put in the condition to be pardoned, accepted, and saved; individually introduced to a participation of the highest privileges which God has bestowed on his children upon earth, and of the most glorious hopes which he has opened to them in heaven. We have each of us, personally, been taken from that state in which our fathers were once exposed, "without God and without hope," and made to "sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." If we have any right sense of our privileges, this will be reason for joy indeed — joy that the highway of life is opened before us, and that nothing may hinder us from glory, honor, and immortality, if we be but faithful to ourselves; joy in God, who has thus manifested his divine love, and not suffered even our sins to separate us from his mercy. To him, then, be our gratitude given. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ." Of his own voluntary and unsolicited grace, unmoved, except by the inherent and immutable benignity of his own nature, he sent his Son to bestow on us that light, to secure for us those advantages, to establish for us those means, by which pardon and life may be ours; to toil for us that we might be free, to die for us that we might live. To him, therefore, be our gratitude and praise; in him be our joy; in him, as our God and Father, be our trust and hope.

Such is the doctrine of our text and of the New Testament. Thus is it calculated to excite gratitude to our heavenly Father, and heighten our devotion.

SERMON VIII.

JESUS THE INTERCESSOR.

ROMANS VIII. 34.

IT IS CHRIST THAT DIED, YEA, RATHER, THAT IS RISEN AGAIN, WHO IS EVEN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, WHO ALSO MAKETH INTERCESSION FOR US.

THIS is one of the only two passages in the New Testament, which speak of Jesus as making intercession. In what this intercession consists we are nowhere distinctly told. The passage before us does not describe it, and the other passage in Hebrews (vii. 25) speaks of it only in a general and figurative adaptation of a ceremonial observance of the Mosaic ritual. This consisted in the sprinkling of blood on the mercy-seat, upon the annual day of propitiation. In conformity with this, some have been fond of representing the intercession of Jesus, as the sprinkling of his blood before the throne of God in heaven. But this is to speak without any distinct sense; for we know that there is no material throne in heaven, and that he did not strictly bear thither the blood which flowed upon the cross. It is but a strong figure, which needs to be explained.

Others suppose it to signify simply the presenting of his humanity, (as they term it,) that is, his ascended human body, before God, to remind him, by its presence, of his

gracious promises to men, and of what had been suffered for them. They suppose this perpetual exhibition of the body in which he suffered, to be the essence of that intercession which he makes for his church.

Others suppose it to consist in his perpetually pleading his merits before God, and claiming the reward of his obedience and death, in the salvation of the saints.

It is not necessary to discuss all, or either, of these opinions. They are merely inferences from single undefined expressions, like that of our text, and may seem to be more or less plausible, according to the general notions of that religious system which any one may have adopted.

Let us, then, pass by these, and examine the subject for ourselves.

To intercede, or to make intercession, signifies to interpose, in behalf of another, to some third person, who has power to show him favor. This may be done either by action or by word. Whatever, therefore, our Lord has done, by his life, death, labors, or prayers, in behalf of man, may be considered as part of his intercessory office.

For by all these he stepped in, like Aaron with the censer to stay the plague, between man and ruin, and by all helped forward his salvation. It is consequently supposed by many, that this language is only a general expression to signify, that he "exercises kind offices" in behalf of men. In this case, however, it is plain that intercession would be precisely the same thing as the exercise of his mediatorial office. All the services, which Christ has rendered man, are done by him as Mediator. That office comprehends every exercise of his love, every display of his benevolence, every effort to extend salvation. Intercession should be regarded as one of these modes of exertion, rather than as all. Even if it were allowable to consider the term as in-

cluding all his kind offices toward man, or as an indefinite phrase to signify whatever it may be which he does for man in his exalted state; yet it may be more strictly exact to understand it as intending intercession by prayer. This seems to be the more usual sense of the word, both in our own language and in that of the original Scriptures.

The doctrine, then, seems to be, that our blessed Lord, who poured out his prayers as well as his life for men when on earth, forgets not, in his exalted state also, to seek their benefit by his prayers, and thus to express the interest which he still takes in that race for which he labored and died.

It will be my object to illustrate the truth of this doctrine, to clear it from objection, to explain its purposes, and unfold its uses.

I. 1. We may remark, in the first place, — that Jesus should be engaged in such an office, is perfectly consonant to all that we know of the mode of the divine administration, and to all that we understand of the method of God's operations in the universe. He has every where established a uniform system of mutual dependence. Nothing stands by itself. No being exists alone. All lean upon each other. Every individual is made to help others, and to receive help from others. It is a large, comprehensive arrangement of beneficence, in which God's kind purposes are effected by causing his creatures to do kind offices to one another. The very worlds which roll through space are dependent on each other, and influence each other. Men are dependent on one another for existence and for happiness. The parent and child, the teacher and pupil, the ruler and subject, the rich and poor, all are needful to each other. And look where we may, every thing and every being seems made, not for itself only, but for the benefit of others also.

The intercessory office of Jesus may be regarded as part of this wide-spread and all-embracing system. Agreeably to this universal law of kindness, God has appointed that his children on earth shall receive favor and blessing through the various instrumentality of his dear Son. It is his favorite procedure to bestow his gifts by means of intermediate agents; to withdraw himself, as it were, from immediate action and observation, that he may exercise the virtues and good affections of his children on one another. Thus, in the present instance, he would multiply the objects of their affection and gratitude, by appointing that favors shall be conveyed to them through the intercession of their Savior.

This is also conformable to the method of his providence and grace, as recorded in the Scriptures. The frequent examples of prevalent intercession, both in the Old and New Testaments, prove to us that this is one of the means by which God has appointed to dispense blessing. When the destruction of Sodom was threatened, how did his condescending mercy listen to the importunate pleading of Abraham, and promise to spare at his entreaty! When the people of Israel had rebelliously sinned, how often were they forgiven, and their punishment delayed, at the interposition of Moses! So, too, the prayers of David and Samuel, of Elisha and Solomon, were acceptable, and the offending friends of Job were pardoned at his intervention. And when the people had transgressed beyond mercy in the days of Jeremiah, the prophet was commanded, as the most decided expression of God's displeasure, "Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me; for I will not hear thee."

The authority of the New Testament is even more decisive than that of the Old. The principle of acceptable

intercession is very frequently recognized. Christians are commanded to pray for one another. The apostles request the brethren to pray for them, and they offer their own prayers for the brethren. Paul directs that "intercessions be made for all men." "Confess your faults one to another," says James, "and pray for one another. The prayer of faith shall heal the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up." Paul earnestly prays in behalf of his countrymen, and often assures the churches to which he writes, that he never forgets them in his addresses at the throne of grace.

It thus appears that, among the good services which men are made to render to one another, this of intercession stands prominent and conspicuous. As they are bound to "do good as they have opportunity," so they are taught that they have an opportunity, whenever they hold communion with their heavenly Father.

If it be so with all; if every righteous man have this privilege; if the ear of the Almighty be thus open to the cry of every benevolent heart, — how much more must it be so to the voice of his chosen, his anointed, his dearly-beloved Son! If this be a means of cultivating benevolence and dispensing favor in the hands of all his children, how peculiarly must it be so in *his* hands, to whom the great work of love was appointed, and whose desire of man's happiness is so earnest and extensive! How must his heart, overflowing with that love which passeth knowledge delight to pour itself out before the seat of his Father's mercy, in petitions of grace for the erring, of pardon for the penitent, of strength for the weak, of aid for the tempted! How must he delight to add to all other demonstrations of interest in their souls' well-being, this of a tender recollection of them in his prayers!

Consider how it was during his residence upon earth.

Several of his prayers are recorded in the Gospels, and among them are prayers of intercession. "The enemy hath desired you," said he to Peter, "that he may sift you as wheat; and I have prayed for *thee*, that thy faith may not fail." He prayed particularly for Peter, because his ardor and rashness exposed him to especial peril. When stretched upon the cross, he prayed for his enemies; and before that scene of suffering began, he poured out his soul in the most affectionate strain of supplication for his chosen disciples. This, his longest, his most striking act of devotion, was almost exclusively an act of intercession. He appeared as their Advocate before the Father. He pleaded for them with earnest and profound feeling; appearing to concentrate the whole strength and tenderness of his disinterested love in this official act of friendly intercession.

Will any one suppose that his ardent devotion to the interests of his followers and the church expired when he left them in the world? that he no longer cared for them, when he had ascended from their sight, nor took concern in their improvement, purity, and peace? Or will any one imagine that he no longer possessed the privilege of interceding with his Father? that, when risen to his glory, the liberty and efficacy of this benevolent act were taken from him? It cannot be. It were not possible that he should have changed his feelings, and lost his solicitude for that work in which he had lived and died, suffered and triumphed, been humbled and glorified. Neither could it be possible that he, who watched over and instructed his growing church, and sought for it God's choice blessing, to the very moment when the cloud received him from human sight, should, from that moment, have ceased to plead its cause in the presence of that God to whom he had ascended.

The representations of the New Testament confirm this

idea. It is very evident, from them, that, during the apostolic age — that is, until the destruction of Jerusalem and the extinction of the Jewish polity, — our Lord did continue to manifest an active and personal interest in the concerns of his followers and the prosperity of his church. "Lo, I am with you always," said he, "even unto the end of the world;" by which we understand what the term so frequently means in the Christian Scriptures, the end of the Jewish world, the close of the Jewish age, or dispensation. That this promise was fulfilled by his actual occasional presence with them, is manifest from several passages. He appeared personally to Paul for his conversion. He seems afterwards to have appeared to him on other occasions. And there are frequent intimations, that the disciples received from him direction and counsel, in a manner wholly unknown in later times, after the infant church had obtained a firm footing in the world. All the aid which he thus vouchsafed to his struggling and suffering followers was in furtherance of that magnificent design to which he had devoted himself. And can we then suppose that it ceased to hold a place in his near and unceasing communion with God? Is it not most consistent and reasonable to believe that he, who had so magnanimously consecrated himself to this holy cause, and been its advocate in one sphere, should continue to be its advocate in another sphere? Is it not most agreeable to all our conceptions of the benevolence and devotion of Jesus, to believe that the apostle states the literal fact, when he says in our text, that he who died for us, and rose again, and is at God's right hand, also makes intercession for us? Should we not expect to find that, as he "ever lives," so he "ever makes intercession"?

Still, however, objections may arise to the doctrine thus

stated. Some of these it was our second purpose to consider.

II. 1. The first objection which occurs to me as likely to be made to these statements, arises from a general feeling of incredulity in regard to what does not come within the limits of actual personal knowledge. We are not easily brought to conceive that the employment of beings in the invisible world can have any near connection with us, or our lot be a matter of knowledge or interest to them. And hence we are inclined to receive with a certain hesitating incredulity the idea that Jesus intercedes for us in heaven.

This seems to me to be owing to our too much dividing this world in our thoughts from the coming state. We are so engrossed with present things, that we regard the visible and invisible states not only as separate, but altogether distinct and unconnected. This is doubtless an error; and the removal of this would remove all difficulty on this account — a difficulty arising from false associations of feeling, rather than from any well-grounded reason.

For we are to reflect, that, in truth, the connection between these states is most real and intimate, the one being a continuation of the life commenced in the other. Now, there is this essential difference between the condition of us, who remain upon earth, and the spirits of those who have departed to the unseen state. Their condition we have never experienced nor witnessed; and therefore we cannot fully understand its character nor sympathize in it. It is to us the untravelled region of imagination and hope, of which we have heard that it is, but have not seen what it is. But with our condition, they, on the contrary, are familiarly acquainted; they have once taken part in it; they know the feelings, the employments, the exposures, the pleasures, the trials, of earthly existence; they can enter into all the joys

and sorrows, hopes and fears, anxieties and raptures, of their friends below. Although, therefore, we, from our inexperience and ignorance, may seem to be utterly disconnected from them, and from all concern or sympathy with them, yet they, who have been so recently dwellers upon earth, must still feel that they are not wholly severed from us. They must still have a lively recollection of what passed and affected them in this important abode of their probation; must still take an interest in the scenes and the friends which they have left; must be desirous to promote, if possible, their welfare, and anxious to avert from them evil. It is as if they had gone to a distant continent, whence their hearts still run back to family and home, and rejoice in tidings from the land that they loved.

We cannot view this matter differently, unless we suppose, either that the memory of this first period of life is blotted out from the soul at death, or else that the affections are so changed as to become at once indifferent to all that they knew and cherished here. But we cannot indulge either supposition. Every thing that is taught us respecting a future life gives the assurance, that there is a close connection between that and the present; that that, in truth, is a direct continuance of this; linked intimately to it by the consequences of action and character which follow from this world to that. There can, then, be no obliteration of the memory. To a state of retribution the recollection of the past state of duty is essential. For there could be no just punishment of sins of which the sufferer is not in some sense conscious, and no righteous recompense of services which are not in some sense remembered. Besides, it is plain that nothing but an express and arbitrary act of omnipotence could blot the memory of past existence from the soul — an act which

we have not the slightest reason or authority to warrant us in supposing.

Neither have we any ground for supposing any supernatural change in the affections at that moment. Man, risen from death, is still man — the same man, so far as regards his character, feelings, and affections, that he was when he fell asleep. If these be not the same, his personal identity is gone. Admitted to the joys of heaven, he still must be conscious that he has just quitted the society of earth, and must have a desire that those whom he loved below should be united with him above — a desire stronger than ever, we should think, because heightened by an actual sense of heavenly felicity. If our Savior represents the selfish rich man as anxious that his brethren might not come to the same place of torment, how reasonable to suppose that the good — who were less selfish and more attached to their earthly friends — should be solicitous that those friends should come to the same place of bliss; and, though they might not be able to send them a messenger from Abraham's bosom, yet should seek, by prayer at least, to obtain for them the blessing.

There is, therefore, no good reason for that distinction of interests which we are so apt to imagine placed between the two states. We deceive ourselves, because we have never experienced the nearness of the connection. We should reflect that the inmates of the other world have experienced it. If we would, in imagination, exchange places with them, and consider with what feelings we should look back upon this spot of our infant being, we should understand how close is the tie which binds together the invisible and visible worlds, and how strongly it is felt by them, though so little realized by us. We should be persuaded that their thoughts and affections still run back to former

scenes and friends, and that the prayers of heaven, where angels rejoice over penitent sinners, do not forget to mention the friends of earth. We, then, instead of the cold, incredulous assent which we now give to the doctrine of Christ's intercession, should feel that nothing could be more natural or more agreeable to his character and office. If our fellow-men carry with them the recollections of earth, and the desire to benefit their friends, how much more must He, the whole object of whose life was to fit men for that world; who left upon earth a mighty work but just commenced; who left the church he had just founded struggling for its existence, and the dearest desires of whose heart can be accomplished only by its growth and prosperity! The work which he began is still going on, as important, as interesting, as glorious, as ever. He cannot be separated from it. However others might be able to forget all their labors and objects of interest on earth, it cannot be so with the Messiah; for heaven and eternity are interested in them. However to others the two states might become distinct and separate, to him they could never be so. For what his truth has begun to effect here, is going on to its completion there. It is only by knowing its whole progress, that he can "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." He cannot cease to care for it, to be engaged for it, and to speak of it in the everlasting communion which he holds with his Father. He cannot be unconcerned for any spirit here, which he hopes to welcome to glory there.

2. Another objection to this doctrine may be, that no consequences are discernible. If Jesus were truly interceding for men, we should perceive its effects in their conversion and subjection to him. His religion would not be so slighted, its extension would not be so limited. But as it has spread so imperfectly, and so many who have received

are yet so little affected by it, it is not easy to believe that Jesus has been actually employing so efficient means.

This objection proceeds upon the supposition that the intercession of the Mediator must necessarily be all-prevailing; that such must of course be its virtue, as to occasion at once the perfect accomplishment of his great work. But we have no authority for such a supposition. It is without sufficient reason or warrant that we fancy the Deity pledged to grant immediately, unreservedly, and perceptibly, the petitions of the intercessor.

It is true, when our Lord uttered his prayer at the tomb of Lazarus, he said, "I know that thou hearest me always." He had asked for permission to exercise his power in raising his friend from the dead, and he gave thanks that it was granted: "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me." But this, it is plain, refers only to his power of working miracles on earth. And it must be observed that there is a great difference between such operations on the bodies of men, and the influence of religion on their souls. The souls of men are subject only to a *moral* influence. There can be no reformation or holiness by compulsion. Reformation and holiness come only through the operation of truth, by motive, argument, persuasion. These are the means which God has established in the world, and which Jesus came to bring. And if his intercession should have the effect to work a miracle in every heart, it would be to supersede at once, and render useless, all those extensive means, which, with so great pains and cost, have been instituted for man's salvation. But it plainly cannot be designed to interfere with and frustrate, but only to aid, that vast and gracious system; and therefore this objection — which simply amounts to this, that it has not overturned the

whole provision of moral means in the Christian dispensation — is entirely destitute of weight.

Indeed, the objection might be urged quite as plausibly against the whole system of revelation itself. It is an obvious fact, that revelation does not accomplish the whole of that extensive good which it was designed to effect. The gospel was sent into the world to abolish the empire of sin, and establish the prevalence of holiness. Yet it has never done it. The dominion of sin is still powerful and extensive, and multitudes live and die without righteousness or religion. This is true even of the Christian world; how much more true of the whole world! Now, we might quite as safely reason, that the gospel has not been announced, because we do not witness its promised perfect operation, as that Jesus does not intercede, because we do not witness what we should suppose to be the complete efficacy of such intercession. The truth is, that nothing at present has its full and perfect effect. Every thing is in tendency, rather than in result. The design and tendency of the government of Providence are to happiness; yet there is a great deal of unhappiness. But this unhappiness is no objection to a thoughtful mind against the benevolent tendency of the system.

Besides; the objection we are considering adopts the very inadmissible supposition, that we are acquainted with all the results of our Lord's intercessory labors; that we actually know how far they avail, and where they cease to avail; whereas, in truth, we know nothing about it, and can know nothing. How can we tell that many favors and deliverances, which we least suspect, and of whose existence even we know nothing, are not owing to this very circumstance? How can we tell, if this were to cease, what would be the diminution of the general influence of religion, and

of its peace and joy in our own breasts? From the nature of the case, we must necessarily be profoundly ignorant in regard to all particulars. It is much the same as in regard to the efficacy of prayer. We know that it avails — that "the fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man avails much." But who can tell in precisely what instances, and to what extent? We have the public institutions and ordinances of our faith operating in the midst of us, and within the sphere of our constant observation. Yet we are wholly unable to estimate the extent and determine the limits of their influence. Many persons profess that they are unable to discern it in any degree. It were, therefore, to be expected that the operation of our Lord's intercession would be imperceptible. It might be great and powerful, and yet we be altogether unable to detect it.

3. Another objection to the doctrine may be, that it operates against the character of the Supreme Father. It seems to imply that he is less disposed to show favor to his children, and that he needs to be solicited and persuaded by some being more benevolent than himself.

This objection is grounded entirely in misapprehension, as will be evident from considering what I proposed as the third head of discourse.

III. The purpose to be answered by the intercession of Jesus.

The objection just named supposes this purpose to be, to change the dispositions of God from wrath to favor, and render him willing, or induce him, to be kind to his offspring. Now, if this were the purpose, the objection would be insuperable against the doctrine, since it would contradict the whole testimony of the Scriptures concerning the character of God. For, although his displeasure against sin is unquestionable and severe, yet nothing is more certain than

that his disposition toward his creatures is that of a father —is love, grace, antecedent to any solicitation, independent of all external causes. The objection is, indeed, valid against any notion of intercession or mediation, which should attribute to it the production of such a disposition; which should suppose, for example, a perpetual contest going on between Jesus the Advocate and God the Judge, in which the one insists on the extreme penalty of the law, and the other pleads, that, having already endured it himself, it should not be again visited on the offenders; or such views as are sometimes given by Watts in his hymns:—

"Rich were the drops of Jesus' blood,
That calmed God's frowning face;
That sprinkled o'er the burning throne,
And turned the wrath to grace."

But the doctrine, which I have stated, is not liable to the objection which rightfully lies against such representations as this. It ascribes no such purpose to the work of Christ, for it does not admit any such to be needed. It stands on the same foundation with the doctrine of prayer. It presupposes that God is gracious, does not undertake to render him so. It is the appointed means by which his grace, already abundant and active, is sought and bestowed. If I beseech God to grant a daily blessing, it is not because I imagine him indisposed to bestow it, and needing to be persuaded to do it; but for just the contrary reason, that he is disposed; and it is suitable and becoming in me, dependent as I am, to apply to him, acknowledging my dependence and need; besides that he has commanded it, as a means of obtaining blessing. So also, if I offer petitions in behalf of a friend, it is for the very reason that I know God to be disposed to bless, and to have appointed this as one means of procuring favor. It is suitable, too, and becoming, that

his children should in this way express and exercise their good feelings toward each other. It is part of that vast connected system of benevolence and mutual improvement, which has already been referred to. We regard our Lord's intercession as a part of the same system. He appears at the throne of grace in behalf of his friends — not because God needs to be entreated and rendered willing to grant blessing; but because, already waiting to be gracious, he has appointed this method of dispensing blessing. It is also suitable and becoming, that He, who is the head of the church, and whom God sent to "lead many sons to glory," should in this way express his care for them, and his interest in them, and be the means of procuring for them that felicity for which he labored and died.

Precisely what we owe to it, the exact nature and extent of the aid, strength, favor, which may be thus communicated to believers, it is not possible for us to know. But that it is something real and great, we have no right to doubt. We cannot precisely ascertain how much or what we owe to our prayers, or wherein human intercessions avail. The Christian poet has said, speaking of the humble piety of the retired man, who lives unheeded by the world, —

> "Perhaps she owes
> Her sunshine and her rain, her blooming spring
> And plenteous harvests, to the prayer he makes,
> When, Isaac-like, the solitary saint
> Walks forth to meditate at eventide,
> And think on her who thinks not of herself." — COWPER.

So also the Christian, perhaps, owes much of the efficacy of his faith, and the serenity of his spirit, the peace and joy which he has in believing, his deliverance in temptation, and his consolation in trouble, and whatever holy influences he may rejoice in, to the intercession of his Lord. At any

rate, one consequence is certain. The doctrine has a tendency to excite gratitude, and to promote the growth of religious affections. To believe that we are thought of in heaven; that our benevolent and truest Friend there takes an interest in us; that the gracious Father of our spirits has appointed that mention shall be continually made of the infirmities, the trials, the penitence, the temptations, the sorrows of his children — so that their state may never be forgotten, and that angels may rejoice in their welfare; to believe this, must strongly conduce to excite devout and grateful affections, to make us feel that we have to do with something better than the follies and sins of time, to make us realize that we are immortal, and ought to be holy, and to bring us, humble, rejoicing, confiding, to the throne of mercy, consecrated to his service who has loved us with an everlasting love.

This is what may be called the moral efficacy of the doctrine; and may lead us to consider, as was in the last place proposed,

IV. The practical uses of the subject.

These, to one who is persuaded of its truth, cannot be slight. If we know that some valued friend, whose heart is one with us, and who earnestly desires our good, makes it one of the offices of his devotion to mention us affectionately before God and implore his benediction upon us, who of us can fail to be touched by such an act of friendship? Who would not be led to strive that he might be worthy of the prayers thus presented, and not forfeit the blessings thus implored? The great apostle to the Gentiles frequently reminds his brethren that "always, in all his prayers, he makes mention of them before God." How likely was this to impress them with an affectionate and holy awe! How solicitous must it have rendered them to reward his kind-

ness, and not to provoke the displeasure of that gracious Being to whom they were commended! And who can doubt, that, in all succeeding ages of the church, multitudes of souls have been impressed and won by the reflection, that their minister remembered them daily and nightly in his prayers; that, when thoughtless of themselves, he had not ceased to be concerned for them; and that his friendly intercessions for them, if despised and neglected on their part, would rise up to their shame and condemnation at last? How often, also, has the minister, amid the toils and anxieties, the trials and disappointments, attendant on his labors, been comforted by the assurance that the faithful of his flock are bearing him up in their prayers at the mercy-seat; that, in sympathy and love, they implore for him that aid and guidance, which only can support and cheer! This assurance is balm to his spirit. It gives him animation and confidence, and makes his heavy burdens light. If, then, Christians would but realize that He who is more than a friend, more than a pastor, — the Author and Finisher of the faith which gives them life, — "who died for them, and rose again, and is seated at the right hand of God," — who will come again to judgment in the clouds of heaven, and from whose own voice they hope to receive a welcome to the joys of their Lord, — that he "makes intercession for them;" — how powerfully might it operate to inspirit their devotion, to excite their zeal, to quicken their improvement, to console them in trouble, to encourage them when doubtful and desponding!

Let us seek to secure to ourselves this good influence. When we raise our desires to Him from whom cometh our help, it may warm and animate us to remember that we have an "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the right-

eous." Offered through him, as the appointed way to the Father, our prayers cannot be frustrated nor lost.

The same thought may help to make us watchful. If we have an habitual persuasion that our virtue and salvation are anxiously desired by our Lord, we cannot fail to be more anxious for them ourselves, and to watch for them diligently. If Peter had borne humbly in mind his Master's words, — Simon, I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not," — he would have been earnestly on his guard, and not have fallen. But he forgot it, and his faith failed. So may ours fail, if we will not secure it by the grateful recollection of what is still done in our behalf.

We may find this persuasion of particular worth to us in times of temptation, sorrow, and spiritual despondency. When we deeply feel our weakness and insufficiency, when the world is dark, and our hearts are gloomy, and peace seems departed, then we may find in this doctrine a soothing and strengthening power. We lean upon the compassion of one, who " was in all points tempted as we are," and was " made perfect through suffering." We feel secure of sympathy from Him who suffered for us in his humiliation, and does not forget us now that he is exalted; and while we meditate and pray, the cloud is gradually removed, and we are restored to the brightness and calmness of spiritual peace.

SERMON IX.

CHRIST THE JUDGE OF THE WORLD.

JOHN V. 22.

FOR THE FATHER JUDGETH NO MAN, BUT HATH COMMITTED ALL JUDGMENT TO THE SON

Our knowledge of the character and dispensations of God is derived from two sources — his works and his word; each of them addressed to and interpreted by our understanding. His works — by which we mean the whole constitution of nature, so far as exposed to the view and investigation of man — offer the most convincing proofs of the existence, perfections, and agency of the omnipresent Spirit, and afford instructions, to a certain extent, clear and unquestionable, concerning his will and purposes. This is the religion of nature. His word contains the religion of revelation; a more complete discovery of his perfections and government, and comprising information respecting his designs and law, of which his works teach nothing. Especially in what regards the final purposes of God respecting the human race, and the mode in which they shall be accomplished, revelation unfolds what reason could never have gathered from nature. That there is a God, and that he rules the universe, "all Nature cries aloud through all her works." "That he

delights in virtue," is also evinced by the law written on the heart. But of the great purpose of the present administration, of the final issue of this state of things, and the destiny which awaits man at the close of his mortal career, nothing is taught with certainty, and little can be even distinctly conjectured, from the intimations of nature around us, or the working of reason within us. What is known upon these points is derived from revelation. There we learn distinctly the objects of our existence, the intentions of our Maker concerning us, the means of securing his favor, the certainty of another life, and the true way to avoid its misery and insure its bliss. The important mysteries of the divine administration are laid open before us — "even that mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but is now made manifest by the writings of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God."

These Scriptures especially teach — what the works of God could never tell us — by what agency and through whose intervention the eternal benefits of divine grace are offered and secured to man. They alone unfold the offices of the Mediator between God and men, who brings the instructions and promises of a new covenant, and announces the peculiar relations and duties thence arising. All this, however, although not recorded in the volume of nature, is yet consistent with whatever that volume teaches. The dispensing of grace by Jesus Christ is an arrangement of the divine will altogether analogous to the other dispensations of God. It is conformable to all that we discern of the uniform and general procedure of Providence. Every thing in the universe is conducted through the ministration of subordinate agents. God bestows existence, and supports it, not by his own direct action, but through intermediate agency. He guides and rules, dispenses favor and mani-

fests displeasure, by the operation of second causes, interposed between himself and his children. All things are his ministers and messengers to his offspring, in which and through which he is manifested, and they are his ministers and messengers to one another. It is one vast and unbroken system of mediation, ministration.

In perfect conformity to this, when he would establish among men the way of salvation, and bring them to everlasting life, he sent to them a Mediator, who should execute all which might be necessary to fulfil the purposes of the new dispensation, and be the head and prince of God's spiritual kingdom.

In order to the complete accomplishment of this extensive work, the Scriptures inform us that the authority of Judge is given to him; that he, who oversees and guides the whole progress of the great spiritual kingdom among men, and is in God's stead to carry it forward to its consummation, is also to be the final distributer of its awards. To this effect our text contains an express assertion — "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son." This is repeated further on — "He hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." The same is implied in several of our Lord's parables, and especially in that which describes him as coming in the clouds, with the angels and glory of his Father, "to separate the evil from the good, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats." The apostle Paul says, "We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." In his address to the Athenians, he stated, in express terms, "that God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained." Peter also, addressing Cornelius, "testified, that it is he who is ordained of God to be the judge of quick

and dead;" an expression which he repeats in his first epistle, and which Paul uses in his second epistle to Timothy.*

These passages decide what is the doctrine of the New Testament on this point. It has been the acknowledged doctrine of the church in all its divisions. It may have been understood in senses somewhat various, but in some sense it has been universally received.

Nothing can be more interesting to the human soul, than the solemnities of judgment. Nothing can be better worthy our habitual reflections, than the fact that there will be a righteous retribution when life shall have closed. All that pertains to that judgment, and to him who shall administer it, must be matter of deepest and most affecting interest. No one, who suffers himself to think at all, can think of it with indifference. I therefore ask attention to the remarks suggested by our text, concerning the nature of the office which Christ thus holds, the authority by which he exercises it, the reasons of his appointment to it, and the duties which are consequently imposed upon us.

1. The nature of this office.

The passages already cited teach that it is to be executed at the final consummation of all things, when the issues of this probation shall be made known, and every man shall receive "according to the deeds done in the body." At that time, it is the Son of man, who shall sit on the throne of the kingdom, and welcome the righteous to the joy of their Lord, and deliver the unprofitable to outer darkness.

The inquiry is here suggested, whether we are to understand that this shall be strictly the act of the Savior, present in his own person; or whether we are to suppose it intended only to represent that the doctrines and laws of his

* 1 Pet. iv. 5. 2 Tim. iv. 1.

religion shall determine the final state of every individual. Is he Judge, in the sense that he personally administers the sentence, or in the sense that it is by his law that judgment shall be passed?

Each of these interpretations may find support from some passages of the Scriptures, and it may not be easy to satisfy ourselves which is the truth.

In regard to the first, it is strongly countenanced by the direct phraseology of the New Testament in a multitude of instances. Jesus is there represented as personally appearing, sitting, speaking, and pronouncing judgment, in a manner which seems at first to require a literal interpretation. It does not at once suggest the idea that nothing else is intended, but that the final distribution of rewards and punishments shall be made according to the rules of his gospel.

But, then, on the other hand, it is well understood, that, in common language, and most frequently in the language of the Bible, one is said to do what he causes to be done, or provides for doing. According to which sense, we may understand Christ to be called the Judge of the world, because he provides the rules and publishes the laws by which judgment shall proceed. He himself authorizes this interpretation, when he says, "If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not; he hath one that judgeth him; *the word that I have spoken*, the same shall judge him at the last day." It seems also to corroborate this interpretation, that he promises his disciples, that they shall "sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel;" and also that Paul says, "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world? Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" Now, we do not for a moment suppose that the apostles shall be actually seated on twelve thrones, and take

part in the distribution of rewards and punishments to God's creatures; much less that all Christians shall be so employed; for they are all to be themselves subject to judgment. And still less do we imagine that they shall be exalted to pass sentence upon angels. We do not hesitate to understand by this language, that the doctrine they hold is the rule by which all shall be judged, that the gospel they profess is the standard by which sentence shall be passed. And why are we not warranted in adopting the same exposition in the instance of our Lord? Why not use as a key to the other expressions his own declaration, that it is "the word which he hath spoken, that shall judge them at the last day"?

It must be acknowledged, however, that perfect satisfaction upon this point is not easily obtained. Neither can it be considered essential. There is necessarily much pertaining to the last great day, and its dread events, which the day only can reveal. It is sufficient for us that we know by what law our actions shall be tried, and by how strict a standard our lives shall be judged. It will be the same thing, as regards our own state, whether our condition be silently determined by the word of Christ, which was given for our direction, or whether it be audibly announced from his lips. In either case, it will be bliss for those who are received, and woe for those who are rejected.

2. We come to the second point proposed — the authority by which our Lord exercises this office. Is it original, or is it derived? Is it his own, or does he receive it from another?

This is a question which can, of course, be answered only by the written testimony of revelation. Conjecture and reasoning upon this point are equally unprofitable and out of place. Only that word, which informs us that he holds the office, can tell us by what authority he holds it.

And here there is no deficiency of information, nor want of explicitness. Every passage to which we have referred either directly asserts, or necessarily implies, that the authority is derived from the Father. "The Father *hath committed* all judgment to the Son." "He hath *given me* authority to execute judgment." "He is *ordained of God* to be judge of quick and dead." No language can be more unambiguous than this. Words could not deny more strongly all claim, on our Lord's part, to an original independent authority in this particular.

But notwithstanding this, it is remarkable that men have been sometimes ready to forget this plain language of our Lord, and be rather guided by the suggestions of their own understanding; for, they argue, it is impossible that the office of judging the world should be delegated. It is a work to which only omniscience and omnipotence are equal; and these qualifications cannot be communicated to a finite being. For which reason, they say, it is necessary, that the judge should be the supreme Deity himself; and hence they conclude that Jesus is himself the Almighty God.

Upon remarks of this sort we may observe, in the first place, that we have no right to say what powers God can or cannot communicate, what authority he can or cannot delegate. It is presumption, in beings like us. How do we know that he may not impart to one of his creatures knowledge wide enough, and power large enough, to execute righteous judgment on the human race, without making it omnipotent or omniscient? What right have we to say that one cannot receive from God authority and wisdom sufficient to rule his church of this world, without making it extend to all worlds? Why is it impossible to believe that God may "COMMIT all judgment" to another?

It is hazardous to reason on this point in opposition to the plain language of revelation. Jesus Christ declares that this authority is delegated, and refrains from all language which may imply underived wisdom, or native right. In words immediately following our text, he adds, "I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father who sent me." Shall we suffer any notion respecting the impossibility of a judgment without independent omniscience to contradict this decisive language?

But further still. The very circumstance which we are ready to rely upon as proving that Jesus could not execute judgment, if he possessed only delegated power, is the very circumstance assigned, in the sacred volume, as a reason for its being delegated. Judgment, it is sometimes affirmed, cannot be impartial and just in the hands of one of limited knowledge. "Who can feel safe," it is asked, "to commit his eternal destiny to the decision of one who is not omniscient?" Such is the wisdom of man. But not such the wisdom of God. He has seen fit to "give" Jesus this authority. And why? For the very reason which men assign for its being impossible — "because he is the Son of man." This is so frequently implied, that we might almost fancy it designed as a rebuke to man's presumptuous argument on the subject. "He hath appointed a day," says Paul, "in which he which he will judge the world in righteousness — *by the man* whom he hath ordained." He himself says, "My judgment is just." Why? Because my knowledge and power are infinite? because I am the eternal and unerring God? Not at all. This is what men may say; but Christ assigns a very opposite reason — "because I seek not my own will, but the will of him who sent me."

It may well be added here, that, even on the supposition

of the union of the divine and human natures in the person of our Lord, this speculative reasoning is altogether unsatisfactory and deceitful. For, in that case, the Scriptures speak of him as judge, never in his divine nature, but only and always in his inferior nature. He hath authority, not because he is God, but "because he is the Son of man." So likewise says Paul — "the man whom he hath ordained." So that, whatever ground may be taken, the Scriptures deny that the possession of divine attributes is essential to this work. If it be said that an influence is derived to the inferior nature by its union with God, this is undoubtedly true. This is what Jesus teaches, and what we insist upon always. "The Father dwells in him," and acts by him. It is not his own will, but the Father's. He judges as he hears, not according to his own will, but according to that of the Father who sent him. But this is a very different thing from possessing underived and inherent authority.

But still it may be urged, that judgment is ascribed to God in the Scriptures, as his peculiar work; and how is this consistent with Christ being judge, if he be not God?

Its consistency will be very apparent, if we take into view this obvious and simple consideration; that while it has pleased the Father to "commit all judgment to the Son," it is his infinite wisdom, justice, goodness, which rule in the Son, and accomplish the great work. He has not left him incompetent, but has given to him "the Spirit without measure." "It hath pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell." In a word, "God *judges the world by him.*"

In this view of the subject, every thing is consistent and satisfactory. Let us hear no more of reluctance to submit to him who is thus appointed. If we will consent to take the doctrine as it stands in the Scriptures, and will not strive

to be wise above what is written, we shall find nothing in it to perplex our understandings, nothing that needs the remedy of our speculations, but every thing to warrant our steadfast confidence, our fervent faith, our unfeigned adoration.

If, however, we desire a little further satisfaction, we may find it in the remarks which occur under the next head of discourse, in which it was proposed,

3. To consider the reasons of this appointment; to inquire briefly and humbly into some of the causes why the Father of the universe, the kind and equal Parent of all, should himself judge no man, but commit all judgment to the Son.

We may, undoubtedly, find one reason in the circumstance to which we have already alluded — that it is the general method of God's administration to provide for and rule his creation by the agency of intermediate ministers. From this method we do not know that there is any departure. To maintain a uniformity with the general system we may readily suppose to be one reason of this judicial appointment. As he had led his people by Moses and Joshua, and taught them by the prophets, and chastened them by the heathen, and enlightened men by a special messenger, and reconciled and saved them by a chosen Mediator, so he would in like manner judge the world by his Son. It is one instance among multitudes of what is the established ordinance of the divine government.

Another reason for this appointment is contained in the remarkable expression of a verse, which I have already more than once cited — "He hath appointed him to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man." There is something indescribably affecting in the disclosure which is thus made of the tenderness of our heavenly Father. He who has

made all, and has a right to all, has not only forborne and cherished his sinful offspring here, and made punishment his strange work upon earth, but has extended his forbearance even to the last sad trial; has, if we may so represent it, descended from his throne of majesty, and stripped it of those terrors of vengeance and indignation, before which neither stubborn guilt nor timid innocence would be able to stand; and has purposed to issue the decisions of that awful day — not even from the milder seat of paternal justice — but from the serene and sympathizing lips of the once human Savior; of one who had been in the world, and known the trials and weaknesses of flesh; who had himself combated temptation, and endured suffering, and been acquainted with grief; who is therefore capable of being touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and extending compassion to those who are out of the way. With such an advocate and judge, of whom all that we have known has been benevolent, tender, and forbearing, — we feel assured that mercy shall reign in the midst of judgment; that while severity flashes on the criminal, there shall yet be no room for unrelenting wrath; but every infirmity shall receive compassion, and all possible allowance be made for the weakness of the flesh and the seductions of the world. Let the timid and desponding disciple be comforted and at peace. Let the tempted and tried, the sorrowing and fearful, give way to no despair. For it is to Him, who bore our infirmities and carried our sorrows, who breaks not the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax — it is to him that judgment has been committed, "because he is the Son of man."

Thus has this appointment been made for the purpose of manifesting the compassion of God. "Mercy belongeth unto thee, O Lord; because thou renderest to every man

according to his works." * Rich, indeed, that mercy! which began with the mission of the Savior, and is consummated in the gracious tenderness of the judgment-seat! What an aggravation to the guilt of that man, who can still go on, hardening himself in sin, and who will carry nothing but corrupt and obstinate disobedience to the presence of eternal love!

4. We were to notice, in the last place, the duty which is, in consequence of this doctrine, imposed upon us. This is stated by our Lord himself in the words succeeding our text — "that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." In consequence of this appointment to judge the world, it becomes our duty to render to him the reverence, submission, and confidence, which appertain to the great Sovereign in whose name he acts. The honors which belong to the prince are demanded for his ambassador. The Lord said, "They who receive you receive me; and they who receive me receive him who sent me." "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess him to be Lord, to the glory of God the Father." This is one appointed test of devotion to God. A right spirit of subjection and submission to him will necessarily be manifested by confidence, faith, and trust in him whom he has commissioned — to refuse which is an evidence of disrespect toward the Sovereign himself.

But this is not our only duty. If Christ is to sit on the judgment-seat, we are to stand before it, and give account of every work which we have done, and of every secret thought, whether it be good or whether it be evil. For that day we are to prepare. The thought of it should have in-

* Psalm lxii. 12.

fluence upon the whole habitual frame of our minds, and the entire character of our lives. It should make sin our abhorrence, and holiness our delight. It should excite us to diligence in the work of obedience and faith, that we may be found blameless and accepted at last. It should lead us to familiar acquaintance with that Word according to which our destiny shall be determined, and to the devout performance of every duty it enjoins; that so we may be welcomed to the joy of our Lord, and not be cast out with the rejected and impenitent.

Finally, brethren, since so momentous consequences depend on the account we are to give at the judgment-seat of Christ, let us accustom ourselves to reflect on the nature of this office, on the authority by which he is invested with it, the reasons for which it is committed to him, and the duties which thence are demanded of us. Let us thus cherish and confirm our conviction of the supremacy of the God and Father of all, and of that excellent grace which is here exhibited. Let us habitually reverence and submit to the authority which he has laid upon his Son. Let us feel with what diligent and grateful fidelity, and with what scrupulous dread of sin, we should look forward to the day of final recompense; when the penitent and believing shall view with joy the smiles of the Redeemer's face; when the unbelieving and disobedient shall taste tenfold anguish from the very tenderness of that compassionate Judge, who shall pity while he condemns.

SERMON X.

ON HONORING THE SON.

JOHN V. 22.

THAT ALL MEN SHOULD HONOR THE SON, EVEN AS THEY HONOR THE FATHER.

It is impossible to contemplate the character and offices of our Lord Jesus Christ without perceiving that exalted honor is due to him. The insensibility of that man can hardly be conceived, who should be able to question or withhold it. We yield a tribute of respect to the good men with whom we meet in the ordinary intercourse of life; and every distinguished benefactor is accounted to deserve the distinguished gratitude and respect of his fellow-men. No one, therefore, who has the common feelings of a man, can deny to Jesus Christ his claims to reverence, gratitude, and honor; whose character exhibits the perfection of moral excellence; whose history is connected with the most wonderful works of universal benevolence, worthy the counsels of heaven; who was declared to be the Son of God by a voice from above; proved himself the friend of men by his labors in their cause, and the conqueror of death by his resurrection from the tomb; who is declared to be "the brightness of God's glory and the express image of his

person," and to whom God has committed the judgment of the world. Even those who have rejected his revelation, and denied his authority as a divine messenger, have been unable to speak of him in any accents but those of admiration. One of the most eloquent tributes in his praise was from the pen of an open infidel. What, then, should be the feeling of his disciples, who believe that he came from God, and that "the Father dwelt in him," and taught by him, and constituted him our Prince, and Savior, and Judge? and that "to receive him is to receive the Father who sent him"? Their hearts must surely burn within them when they think of him. They must anxiously inquire what are the honors demanded for him, that they may not be remiss in rendering them.

The expression of our text is a remarkable one, and offers some important suggestions relative to so interesting a topic. These we shall perhaps pursue to the most satisfactory result by inquiring first, *why*, and secondly, *how, we are to honor the Father*, that we may thence be instructed *why and how we are to honor the Son.*

1. We are to consider, in the first place, *why we are to honor the Father.* Upon what reasons are founded the honors due to him?

Of the infinite Being who is called God we can comprehend but little. "Who by searching can find out God? Who can find out the Almighty to perfection?" We know not the essence of the Deity, nor can we fully comprehend the mode of his existence. Our whole knowledge of him is comprised in a few facts. We know that he exists, and exists through all extent, omnipresent and omniscient. That he is a spirit; that is, he is not the subject of any of our senses, and exists in a manner so different from our mode of existence, that he may be equally present in all

places. That he is eternal; there never was a point of time in which he was not, and there never shall be a time when he shall cease to be. That he is infinitely powerful; capable of doing all which is possible to be done, while not all the collected force of the countless multitudes of other beings could offer opposition. These facts respecting the Deity constitute what are called his *natural attributes*. They enter into the very definition of God; so that a being who does not possess these attributes of almighty power, universal presence, infinite knowledge, and spirituality, is not God.

Now, the question is, whether it be these attributes which require of us the honors we pay to God. Though without these he would not be God, yet is it these upon which are built religious homage and allegiance? There is one simple consideration, which, I think, may satisfy us, that it is not, certainly not entirely nor chiefly; and that is, that if these natural attributes were united with *an evil and malignant character* — supposing such a union possible — we could not be bound to render to that Being the same homage which we now render to our beneficent Creator. If, for example, Satan, the personified principle of evil, — selfish, perverse, and malicious, — were a self-existent, all-knowing, all-powerful, omnipresent, eternal spirit, still we should not for a moment imagine that the honors now paid to the infinitely Good, would of right belong to him

If, then, these attributes do not form the ground of the honors rendered to the Father, what are the divine perfections to which they are rendered? Obviously, those which we call the *moral* perfections — his essential holiness, his perfect rectitude, unerring wisdom, unwavering truth and faithfulness, impartial justice, infinite goodness and mercy. He is clothed with righteousness, purity, and love — the

kind Creator, the observing Governor, the gracious Father; earnestly desiring first the perfect virtue, and then the perfect happiness, of every living being. For these attributes he is reverenced; for these it is that angels and archangels praise him, and hymns of adoration ascend from the lips of glorified spirits; for these it is that his people bend in awe before him, for these that his children love him, and his saints bless him. "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and magnify thy name? For thou only art HOLY." "Praise the Lord, for he is GOOD, for his MERCY endureth forever." *

Such are the reasons for which God is honored. You perceive that they may easily be reduced to two: first, his own character; second, the relation in which he stands to his creatures. He is infinitely excellent and glorious in himself, and to us he is Creator and Proprietor, Governor and Father.

We take these remarks to guide us in speaking of the honor due to the Son of God. As we honor the Father,

* It has been objected to this reasoning, that it is inconclusive, because it keeps too much out of sight the fact that it is the entire character of the Deity, and not any one portion of it, which constitutes him the object of worship. The fact is undoubtedly so; and therefore the statements in this passage are, perhaps, too broad and unqualified; yet I think that they will not be found essentially incorrect by those who will give a careful attention to the whole course and bearing of the remarks. The argument will be perceived to be this: The honors rendered to the Father are grounded on his *character*, and on the *relations* which he sustains to his creatures. By his character I understand his *moral attributes*, while these relations grow out of his *natural* attributes. It is the former, principally, as I say in the discourse, on account of which worship is rendered; although, at the same time, the latter are essential to his very existence as God; and — it should have been expressed as well as implied — his *relation* to us is founded on them.

How, then, is this statement applied to the Son? We are in like

because of his own character, and because of his relation to us, so we honor the Son, because of his character, and because of his relation to us. As it is not the divine nature simply — not the natural attributes of eternity, omnipresence, and spirituality — on account of which divine homage is rendered, but rather the moral perfections of character, so likewise honor is demanded for the Savior, not simply on account of his nature, whatever it may be, not because he is more or less elevated in precedence of existence or native powers; but rather because of his perfections of character, and the offices in which he stands related to us. For it is evident, beyond all dispute, that a being of precisely the same natural rank as our Lord, but without the same character and offices, would have no peculiar claims to honor from men; and that, on the other hand, these claims would be precisely the same, whatever his nature or rank might be, so long as his relations to man were unchanged, and he sustained the place to which God has exalted him in his spiritual dispensations. If, when we receive him as God's Ambassador and Son, clothed with divine authority and wisdom, we obey him as our Master, and love him as our

manner to honor him on account of his *character*, and of the *relations* he sustains toward us — relations, founded, not as those of God, on his *natural attributes*, but on the *appointment* of the Father. So that, even if it were true that the natural perfections of God are in every respect an equal ground of divine honors with the moral, yet the conclusion respecting the honors due to our Savior remains the same; his relations to us being grounded, not, like those of God, on the perfections of his nature, but on the appointment of his Father.

Or, if it be said that these relations of God spring in part also from his moral perfections, still the conclusion is the same; for still the relations and offices of Jesus spring from the appointment of God. [*Author's Note.*]

Savior, and reverence him as our Judge, — then we honor him as the Father. If, when we see the same holy attributes which we adore in God, displayed in the benevolent and spotless life of Jesus, we are led to emotions of admiration and love, — then we honor him as we honor the Father. We receive him in the offices and relations to which God appointed him, and thus in fact receive and honor Him who sent him.

It never must be forgotten that "all things are of God." He is the beginning and end, the support and head, of every thing which exists. Jesus indeed is "Head over all things to the church;" but the apostle tells us that he "was made" so by God. God is the origin and foundation of all. His relation to us he assumed of his own pleasure; he sustains it of his own right and power. Our relation to him is derived from the very frame of our nature, and the original purpose of our creation. We are his offspring; he is our Creator. In these respects our relation to the Lord Jesus Christ differs. It did not commence with the act of creation, is not founded in the original constitution of nature, but is founded by an express appointment of our Creator and Father. It originates in the purposes of his redeeming love, and is in every respect dependent upon his ordinance. This distinction is important to be kept in view, if we would understand the subject rightly. It is amply supported by the perpetual testimony of the Scriptures. It is repeatedly asserted in express terms, and every where implied in their language respecting Jesus. Why does he hold the place of Lord and Christ? Because, saith Peter, "*God hath* MADE this same Jesus whom ye crucified to be both Lord and Christ." Why does he sustain the important rank of Prince and Savior? Because, saith the apostle, "him hath God *exalted* to be a Prince and Savior." In a word, whence

hath he his name above every name, and why in that name must "every knee bow, and every tongue confess him to be Lord"? The apostle replies, because "God hath highly *exalted* him, and *given* him that name." And for whose glory is all this to be done? The same apostle declares, "To the glory of God — the Father."

In all this we find fully maintained the distinction between the honors which Christians are to render to their God and to their Savior. The infinite God claims them in his own name, by his own right, for his own glory. Jesus claims them, not in his own name, nor by his own right, nor for his own glory. He refers them constantly to the Father. Even in the powerful language of our text, he challenges to himself no independent honors, but expressly founds his title on the appointment of God. "The Father judgeth no man, but *hath committed all* judgment to the Son; that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father." Here he declares that he is *appointed* to be judge, not that he is so by inherent right; and that in the execution of that office he is to be honored as the Father who appointed him, and in whose place and for whose glory he acts. In this manner the honor demanded for Jesus is on account of the offices to which God has exalted him; his own authority or right is never alleged as a ground of it, as it always is in the case of God himself. "Of himself," he says, "the Son can do nothing." "All power is committed to me of my Father."

I have thus endeavored to exhibit the foundation of our Lord's claims to honor from his disciples. They rest upon the perfection of his character, and the places to which God has exalted him. As we bow to the authority of God, so, brethren, let us acknowledge these claims. Let us bow in that name above every name, with which the eternal God

hath glorified his Son. Since it hath pleased him to bestow upon him the Spirit "without measure," and to cause "the fulness of the Godhead to dwell in him," let us not be backward in those ascriptions which are justly his due; but let "every tongue confess him to be Lord, TO THE GLORY OF GOD THE FATHER."

But what are these honors, and how to be rendered? This is the second topic of which I proposed to treat.

2. And here, also, as under the other head, we shall be guided by considering *how we honor the Father*.

In the first place, we honor the Father by the direct offering to him of supreme worship, by the express and immediate presentation of adoration and prayer to him, as the ever-present, all-guiding, and infinitely-powerful Sovereign of the universe; who can hear, who receives, and who will reward, this tribute to his glory.

Now, the question is, whether the honors to the Son are to be in the same sense divine and supreme; worship in this high degree — adoration, praise, prayer. There are several reasons which show it to be impossible. The remarks already made prove it; for, we have seen, they show these honors to be derived from different sources. The Father is to be honored as the infinite and sole origin and support of all beings and all things, from whom we came, and for whose glory all things exist. But Jesus derived his power and offices from the will of the supreme Father, and his honors result not to himself alone, but to the Father's glory; which decisively evinces that those honors are not supreme worship.

Besides, our Lord himself determines the point very simply and satisfactorily. As there is but one object of supreme worship, he repeatedly and emphatically — as if for the express purpose of preventing all doubt and mistake —

declares that object to be the Father. He never says, "Pray to *God;*" in which expression, if we believed Jesus to be God, we might possibly suppose him to include himself; but he always says, "Pray to the *Father*," "Worship the *Father;*" "Pray to thy Father, who is in secret;" "After this manner, therefore, pray ye — 'Our Father, who art in heaven;'" "The true worshipers shall worship the Father." He himself, repeatedly, in the presence of his disciples and of the Jews, prayed; and in every instance to the Father. Nay, and what is more still, — as if anxious to remove all cause and every possibility of mistake, — he said to his disciples, "In that day" (that is, after the resurrection) "ye *shall ask* ME *nothing;* verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the *Father, in my name,* he will give it you." Language cannot be more explicit than this. A more plain and positive declaration cannot be given, that we must pray to the Father only. It goes decisively to prove, that the honor spoken of in our text cannot be supreme worship, or divine homage.

This conclusion is fortified by looking once more at the expressions of our text. Our Lord is speaking of his character as Judge; which, he says, is "committed to him of his Father;" and therefore, while he exercises it in the place and by the appointment of the Father, "men should honor him as the Father." Now, this is in accordance with a very obvious and simple principle, which has never been misunderstood in any other case — that he who executes an office in the name of his king, is to be respected in that office as the king. The magistrate is to be honored as he who appoints him, the ambassador as he who delegates him; and to insult or disobey the ambassador or judge, is to insult or disobey the king or nation for which that officer acts. Yet, though the one is honored *as* the other, the forms and testi-

monials of that homage are not exactly the same, nor even of equal dignity. It was according to the same mode of speech, that our Lord said to his apostles, "He that receiveth you receiveth me." No one supposes, from this mode of expression, that no difference was made in the reception of the apostles and of their Master; or, in other words, that the same respect was, or ought to be, shown to both. And when he immediately adds, "He that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me," we understand it in a similar sense. The honor to Jesus is as much the same with that to God, as the respect to his apostles is the same with that to their Master. This sort of language, indeed, is readily understood, and has never led to any mistake, except in the instance of our text. Let us not misunderstand it there. Let us render to the Father the honor due to the Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of all; to the Son that due to the Teacher, Lawgiver, Savior, and Spiritual Prince, whom he has appointed. Let us honor the one, as sitting upon the throne; the other, as the Lamb before the throne; the one therefore as receiving prayer; the other as him through whom it is conveyed. Let us join the crowd of celestial worshipers who cast their crowns before the throne, and worship "Him who liveth forever and ever," and "who hath created all things;" who also "sing a new song" to the Lamb, who "was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his blood."

But direct worship, we are to remember, is not the only mode in which we honor the Father. We honor him by the exercise of *faith* in him; by reposing in his character, and providence, and word, a thorough confidence, unreserved and cheerful trust. When this is done by magnanimously bearing his will, acquiescing in his appointments, and rejoicing in his government, even if it be silently, it is a tribute greater than words can pay, a homage which the

tongue alone cannot render. Even so we honor the Son of God by the exercise of *faith* in him. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." The reliance on the truth of his promises, on the excellence of his character, on the divinity of his mission, and the sufficiency of his work for our salvation, — which is all implied in faith, — is an unequivocal tribute of honor to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again, we honor the Father by *love* to him. This is "the first and great commandment; Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy strength, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." In like manner, we honor the Son by our *love* to him; by cherishing his image with deep and earnest affection; by delighting to meditate on his character and think of his excellences; by commemorating, whenever we may, his labors, sacrifices, and death in our behalf. The love, which the sincere disciple cherishes for his holy Master, is a tribute of the truest honor. It burns in his bosom and elevates his soul, as it did that of the apostles; so that there are seasons, when, kindling into rapture like theirs, he is ready to exclaim, "Whom not having seen we love, and in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Gratitude also forms part of the honors which we render to the Father. That is a most acceptable homage which is offered by the glowing and grateful heart, lifting itself up to God on account of unnumbered and unmerited favors — life, strength, reason, friends; the blessings of earth, the revelations of heaven; the support of his providence, the guidance of his Word, the aid of his Spirit. A similar honor we yield to the Son by the *gratitude* we cherish toward him — for his disinterested labors, his condescending love, his gracious sacrifices; for the life he spent in our service, for

the death he died in our behalf, for his intercessions at the right hand of God. It is a similar feeling and a similar honor to the Son as to the Father.

Further, we honor the Father by *obedience*. There is no mode, indeed, by which we so surely demonstrate our supreme reverence for the Creator and Governor of men, as by the unreserved subjection of heart and life to the obedience of his law. It is the highest and most acceptable tribute we can bring. Ten thousand offerings of eloquent praise and costly gifts are light in comparison of the great gift of the heart and life. So, too, we yield the highest tribute of honor to our Lord Jesus, when we *obey his gospel* in the spirit of it. Who honors him, like him that obeys him? Who is his friend, but he that "keeps his commandments"? It is not by contentions respecting the dignity of his nature, and vehement declamation concerning the love and praise which are his due, that we most effectually promote his glory. The living, acting eulogy of him who breathes his spirit, imitates his example, and keeps his commandments, is an offering infinitely more worthy.

In these several ways the injunction may be observed to "honor the Son even as we honor the Father." God is our Creator and Sovereign, and claims our reverence, faith, love, gratitude, and obedience. Jesus Christ is our Lord and Teacher, our Prince and Savior, and claims our reverence, faith, love, gratitude, and obedience. Let them be yielded to him. Let the homage be rendered, which belongs to him whom God has ordained to be the religious head of the present dispensation of grace, and to judge the world in righteousness. We sit beneath his empire; let us be subject to him. In truth and holiness, in matters of conscience and duty, let us have no master upon earth but him. This is his rightful claim; let it be given to no one else. We

break our allegiance if we yield to any other the dominion over our faith, or the keeping of our consciences. This dominion has been granted to Jesus alone. If any other exercise it, he is a usurper. If any allow it to be exercised, they have rebelled against their spiritual Prince, and taken from his head the crown of honor which God had placed there.

And yet, how prone are we to substitute some easier show of allegiance, in place of this thorough submission of life and conscience! How ready are we to be loud in professions and acclamations, while in fact we have another master, and follow another guide! The disgrace of the church, in all ages, has been its infatuated adherence to human authority, and its willing subjection to human heads. The crown has been torn from Him whose right it is to reign, and placed — not unfrequently with bloody hands — on the brows of arrogant and ambitious persecutors, who ostentatiously became the infallible interpreters of a book which they had sealed, and the capricious masters of the consciences of the Christian world. And thus, while the banner of the cross was made to float proudly amid their armies, and pomp, and parade, and splendid ceremony called the wondering multitude to gaze at the honors which were lavished on the Savior of the world, in the mean time, his authority was virtually trodden under foot, and the hearts of men were far from him.

The church is not yet entirely purified from these sad corruptions. The disciples do not yet sufficiently understand what constitutes the true honor of their Master, and of his gospel. Too many think it sufficient to cry, "Lord, Lord," without "doing the things which he says." Too many are still bowing down to creeds and confessions, idols which their own hands have made, and which draw away

their reverence from the true word of life. Too many are still taking from human lips the interpretation of God's will, while its sacred records lie by them unsearched, and the voice of Him who "spake as never man spake," is not allowed to reach the understanding or the heart, till it has been mingled with the interpretation of some later master. Alas! how has the Son of God been robbed of his honors! How have they been transferred to men! Brethren, do not suffer yourselves to be so deceived. If you call any one master, you withdraw your allegiance from Him who should be your only Master; you exalt a frail man to the seat of judgment, where God has placed his Christ; you surrender your faith and salvation to the wisdom of a fallible being, who ought to be sitting with you at the feet of your common Lord, and you are thus exposed to the hazard of his weakness, errors, and sins. Take, therefore, His word for your guide. All that you may say, or believe, or profess, respecting his dignity, exaltation, and authority, is but empty words, but unmeaning profession, if your consciences are subject to any other dominion, or your life to any other law. When you are so subject to the spirit and influence of his truth, that men shall take knowledge of you that you have been with him, and learned of him, then you will have yielded to him the only sufficient tribute — the only valuable and acceptable homage which man on earth can bring. Then you may know that you are his, and that your labor is done; for he who hath the Son hath the Father also, and he who hath the Father hath everlasting life.

SERMON XI.

THE EXAMPLE OF OUR LORD

HEBREWS XII. 2.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS, THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER OF OUR FAITH.

THE apostle had been naming, in the preceding chapter, a long catalogue of those who were eminent for their faith in former days. In the first verse of the present chapter, he represents them as a "cloud of witnesses," surrounding Christians, by whose presence they should be excited to run well the race set before them. In thus expressing himself, he evidently alludes to the public games, which were of such celebrity and consequence in that age of the world. He urges Christians to persevere, like combatants in the race, who struggled hard for the prize, and to be animated by the attendant crowd of witnesses; and as a further incitement, directs them, in our text, to be also looking unto Jesus, "the Author and Finisher of their faith." Commentators, who are skilled in the original languages, and acquainted with the customs of former times, tell us that the titles here given to Christ are those which belonged to him who presided at the games. Macknight accordingly translates, "the Captain and Perfecter of the faith;" and observes that "the apostle, having exhorted the Hebrews

to run the race set before them, compares Jesus to the judge of the games, whose office it was to determine who were the conquerors, and to make them perfect as combatants by bestowing on them the prizes."

But there is something further implied than even this. The apostle speaks of him as one who has himself run the same race, in spite of its discouragements and hardships, and is now enjoying its rewards; "who, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God;" whom we are, therefore, to regard as an example to ourselves, and to animate our flagging spirits by remembering that, as "he overcame, and is set down with his Father on his throne, so, if we overcome, we shall sit down with him on his throne."

The disciples of Jesus are thus, in the passage before us, directed to "look unto him" as their Leader, their Judge, and their Example; exalted at the right hand of God's throne, because "he endured the cross, and despised the shame." By the example of their Master, thus honored and exalted, the disciples are exhorted to be encouraged and strengthened. It is this exhortation upon which we are to meditate at the present time. Brethren, I wish you to contemplate Jesus to-day as your Example. I wish to bring up to your minds and hearts the pattern of your beloved and honored Lord, and to show you how great encouragement, aid, comfort, and holy peace, may be obtained in all duty, trial, and sorrow, by habitually and fervently looking unto him.

The power of example is too well known to need to be much insisted on. Man has been called — and with some propriety — the creature of imitation. The character of children is very much formed on the model of their parents,

and of those companions with whom they familiarly associate. Every parent knows the importance of this consideration in selecting the person by whom his children shall be instructed, and the school at which they shall find companions. The power of example is plainly seen in the formation of national character. Every separate community among men, whether larger or smaller, is distinguished by certain peculiarities of character and habit. These are to be traced almost exclusively to the influence of example, the manners of one generation being caught by the next, and transmitted down from sire to son indefinitely. The power of example is also seen in the religions of the world. Men have imitated the deities whom they have worshiped, and formed in themselves the characters which they supposed to exist in their gods. "The gods of the heathen are vanity and a lie; they that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them." When the divinities, to whom worship and devotion were paid, were believed to be possessed of human passions, and to be guilty of human vices, — when their histories were filled with selfishness, cruelty, revenge, lust, and every immorality, — it is not strange that men took countenance from their examples, and went to an extravagant dissoluteness of manners, into which, without such encouragement, they could hardly have fallen. As much of the prevalent vice of heathen nations is to be ascribed to this cause, so, doubtless, much of the prevalent virtue of the Christian world is to be attributed to the character of the true God, as he is there worshiped. In Christian lands, too, the efficacy of example has been witnessed and valued in the use which has always been made of the lives of the apostles, saints, and martyrs. In memory of their excellence, some churches have established festivals, and others have published records of their lives,

and circulated volumes in their praise. There can be no doubt, that much has in this way been done to excite and strengthen in the practice of religion and virtue. Living and breathing patterns of excellence are placed before the wayfaring Christian. He witnesses their ardor, is made acquainted with their anxious labors, hears of their severe trials and persevering fidelity; and by observing how they watched and prayed, toiled and suffered, learns to go and do likewise.

Our own experience may perhaps confirm to us these remarks. How often has a holy zeal been kindled within us, while we have read of the faith and patience of some eminent servant of God who has gone before us? How have our resolutions to do and to suffer been confirmed, when we have listened to the story of another's unshaken fidelity and unwearying perseverance! Next to the reading of the Scriptures, and the appointed preaching of God's word, religion doubtless owes more to the persuasion of pious example than to all other causes. Every Christian can remember instances in which it has given ardor to his faith, and confidence to his virtue, and comfort to his troubles. The thought of what Howard did has prompted the benevolence of thousands; and the zeal of Clarkson has kindled a flame in a multitude of souls. Many are they that have been affected and won by the beautiful life of Fenelon, and caught the contagion of religion from the breathing spirit of Watts, or the singular excellence of Cappe. In a word, whatever other means may have been enjoyed, it is the example of the holy and good, which has excited the energy of their minds, and made them capable of great and perilous enterprises, and filled them with longings after perfection.

But if such be the value and effect of contemplating

those who have exhibited before us Christian faith and obedience, — if we may be thus moved and animated by the example of imperfect men, who, after all, have followed their holy Master only at a distance, — what might not be the effect of bringing home to our minds, and setting before us in our lives, the perfect example of that blessed Master himself? I fear, brethren, that we place him too far from us. I fear that we too much neglect to bring him near, and keep him before us, and realize the manner of his conversation and life; and that he requires us, not only to do according to his commandment, but according to his example. Yet why should we not realize this? Why not literally make him our Pattern? Why not, in every season, "look to him;" think how he did in a similar situation; what dispositions he indulged on similar occasions; how he would conduct himself, and how feel, in circumstances like our own? Is not this practicable? Would it not greatly assist us? Would it not often deliver us in perplexity and error? It is true, he lived many ages ago. But time and distance are nothing in a case like this. The mind has power to bring him near, and he is as important and personal a friend now, as if we had lived in his own day. It is true, also, his example is in a sense so perfect, that we may not hope to equal it. But this should be no discouragement. It should rather animate us the more. It is an old proverb, that he who aims at the sun, to be sure will not reach it, but his arrow will fly higher than if he aimed at an object on a level with himself. Just so, if other men are our standard, we shall never be better than other men; probably not so good. But if we imitate Jesus, we shall certainly rise above them, though we shall come far short of him. Besides, there is nothing impracticable in the virtues of Jesus; that is to say, nothing which is

above the earth, and the concerns or wants of the earth, in such a sense as to be unsuitable to men, or to render it romantic for them to practise it. On the contrary, his is one of the most practical characters in the world; exhibiting specimens of the very dispositions, principles, habits, which are of the most constant and indispensable need in the intercourse and duties of life. What more so than his invariable gentleness, his untiring benevolence, his ready forgiveness, his humility and condescension, his meekness and patience, his cheerful contentment, his activity in duty, his fortitude in suffering, his unreserved trust in divine Providence, his holy submission to the divine will? These are the prominent features in his human character. These are the qualities in which he should be our example; they are qualities every day, every hour, needed, and the possession of which would render every day, every hour, tranquil, lovely, and happy. And this example is set before us as one which we should by no means gaze at with despair, because exhibited by one who — in the language of holy writ — "was made in all points like unto his brethren; who took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham; as the children are made partakers of flesh and blood, so he also himself took part in the same; was in all points tempted like as we are, though without sin; and, though a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered." In this language of the sacred volume, we find him represented as passing through the infirmities and trials of life, obeying and suffering in all things like his brethren, and in all things an example to his brethren; who, by witnessing his temptations and trials, his "strong crying and tears," his obedience and faithfulness, may learn what they ought to do, and how they should do it; and may be comforted, strengthened, and supported in all, by looking unto

him. In respect of such things, says the apostle, "he is not ashamed to call them brethren;" and how encouraging to them may be the thought, that, in seeking to become "heirs of God," they are "joint heirs with Christ"!

Is there not something possible — I had almost said, something easy — in setting up before us such a Pattern! If we should do it faithfully, would not our hearts cleave to it? and should we not soon learn to loathe every path, in which we had not seen his pure feet tread? Should we not delight to gaze upon his benevolence and piety, his activity and patience, his humility and fortitude? and while we contemplated them familiarly, should we not even copy them involuntarily, and grow like him, as a child grows like its beloved parent, — unconsciously, and because we could not escape the celestial contagion?

It must be evident, then, that our Lord's example is not such a one as we cannot follow, but has been most wisely and kindly adapted to our situation and wants. If, then, the power of example over man be great, as we have seen, and that of good men have done so much to influence and form human character, the value of this example, if faithfully applied to our lives, and assiduously followed, must be great beyond all calculation. There is no good feeling which it might not perfect, no amiable virtue which it might not form, no suffering which it would not enable us to bear, no temptation which it might not help us to subdue. It would be a present aid, a sure counsellor, an unerring guide, in every perplexity, trial, and duty. The world might fling around you her most fearful shades of darkness and despair; and every human power be ready to shrink from the path in which Providence should lead you; but yet, steadfastly looking unto Jesus, — who once endured it all, — observing how he struggled, how he conquered, and how he is exalted,

you would feel a strength by which you might dissipate the cloud and the terror, and find every mountain and hill brought low; yea, you might even, as the Lord promised his disciples, "tread on serpents, and scorpions, and all the power of the enemy; and nothing should by any means hurt you."

This may be made yet plainer by observing its operation in a few particular cases.

You desire to know by what dispositions toward God you may attain his acceptance. You know, indeed, that supreme love to him is the commandment; but you would learn more definitely in what this love consists, and in what kind of demeanor it exhibits itself. "Look unto Jesus, and learn of him" — the fairest, the fullest example of perfect love. You see it in him an essential, all-pervading, ever-operating principle; not distinct and separate from every other feature of his character, but inwoven with all the others, and inseparable from them; the spirit of all, rather than a spirit by itself. It is exhibited in a calm, equal, and unwavering contentment; because he entirely trusts Him whom he loves; in quiet, solemn, and constant intercourse with him in prayer; not in noisy and extravagant raptures, but in the deep and fervent communion of a full heart, whose feeling is too real to be loud. Especially it is exhibited in anxious efforts and ready sacrifices to do his will, and accomplish the appointed work of his good pleasure. Fix your eye upon this beautiful pattern of perfect piety, follow these steps, and you will never need be at a loss for the path of the perfect love of God.

Perhaps you are beset with temptation. The world and sin entice you. They have spread their snares, and placed you amid bad and seducing companions, from whom you

can hardly hope to escape without corruption. Your resolutions are assailed, and your faith seems about to be wrecked. "Look unto Jesus;" remember him, tempted in all points as you are, that he might be able to "succor those who are tempted." Remember how he struggled with the adversary of souls in the desert, and overcame the strongest solicitations — solicitations to which yours are not to be compared. Remember how the trial of his soul wrought an agony in the garden, when so strongly tempted to refuse the cup that was prepared for him. Remember how, in those trying seasons, he summoned to his aid the word of God, and baffled the tempter with this "sword of the Spirit;" and how he waxed strong and became conqueror by persevering in prayer. Go thou, and do likewise. No temptation is too powerful for him who will watch and pray like his holy Lord; and do not thou lose an honorable place in his kingdom by weakly shrinking from a contest, in which he hath taught thee how to fight, and to become more than conqueror.

Here is another man, beset by the sin of pride. A lofty spirit and high heart are his glory. He despises others, and lives only to aggrandize himself. My friend, "look unto Jesus." He — the Author and Finisher of our faith — the noblest personage that ever walked the earth — who possessed more than human knowledge and wisdom, and wielded the powers of Heaven — are you greater than he, that you should thus exalt yourself, while he was so humble, so lowly, so unassuming? Behold him, who stripped himself of his honors, who took "the form of a servant," who came, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister," — and blush for your own swelling importance. There is no pride in Jesus. How unbecoming, then, in you! How despicable

do the vain and haughty appear by the side of the unassuming and condescending humility which graced the life of the Son of God! How little able will you be to indulge emotions of arrogance and self-sufficiency, if you faithfully set before you that beautiful and affecting example!

Here is another, the slave of angry and revengeful passions, easily provoked to wrath, and betrayed to violence. "Look unto Jesus; learn of him who was meek and lowly in heart." Is there any thing more lovely than his equable and long-suffering gentleness, "who, though reviled, reviled not again; though he suffered, threatened not, but submitted himself to Him that judgeth righteously?" Why may not you do likewise? Why *will* you not do likewise? Why should not patience and meekness be honorable in you as well as in him? And why should revenge and passion be less odious? Be but familiar with his quiet temper, and feel how lovely it is in him, and you cannot cherish those opposite dispositions, which will then be hateful in your sight.

Again, you are perhaps suffering from the injuries of men and the injustice of the world; you have been wronged, or disgraced, or persecuted; and how shall you conduct yourself under these aggravated evils? "Look unto Jesus," and take instruction from his example. You see in him no boiling indignation, no impatience of revenge, no returning of malice for malice. But his spirit, though oppressed, still retains its serenity, and, turning from the injustice of man, finds repose on the justice of God. Be not you, then, impatient. Be not you overwhelmed by passion or despair. Your sufferings cannot compare with his; and shall you not at least strive to bear them like him? You cannot meet equal injustice; and will you not seek at least for equal

composure? Behold him, who had spent the faithful days of a laborious life in doing good; whose only care was to benefit mankind; and who displayed an extent of active benevolence never before even imagined; yet assailed by those very persons for whom he had been laboring, cruelly arraigned before an unfeeling tribunal on a false pretence, and subjected to all the ignominy and torture of a mock trial — smitten — buffeted — scourged — derided — insulted — dragged away to a lingering and disgraceful death. Have you endured hardship and injustice to be named with this? Yet no murmur escapes him; no passion ruffles his composure; no resentment flashes from his meek and supplicating eye; no accent of wrath or threatening comes from his oppressed and dying bosom; but even in the last moment of mortal agony, he lifts his compassionate voice in a prayer of mercy — "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" In the hour of suffering and despair, reflect upon this scene; try if you cannot catch something of the spirit of your Master, and bear your trial like him.

Perhaps you have afflictions of another kind. Calamity and death visit your dwelling, and the lights in which you rejoice are quenched by your side. Your friends are removed, your hopes are destroyed, and you sit in thick darkness, desponding and alone. Here, too, the example of Jesus may cheer and sustain you. Look therefore to him. Call to mind the instructions which he, the Author and Finisher of your faith, has given, concerning the government of your Father, and the purposes of his providence. Call to mind also the day when he bore the calamities which God had appointed him; when he was emphatically "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" when he might

have cried to you and said, "Come and see, all ye that pass by, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow." Yet you see him, not giving way to the grief, not overcome by the sorrow, but struggling against it, looking up to God with serene and holy trust, casting his spirit on his Father with unrepining and tranquil submission. "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" This is no example of unfeeling composure, of stoical insensibility, of unnatural fortitude. Jesus struggled, even to an agony, that he might attain it. Go, heart-broken mourner, and do likewise. Go, as he did, and pray — not once, but twice, and thrice; and God will answer you, too, by "an angel from heaven to strengthen you" — not indeed in a visible form, but in an inward peace. It is no sin to mourn and weep. Jesus wept. The sin lies in refusing to look for comfort, in obstinately murmuring against the hand of God, in complaining of his severity. Jesus even prayed that "the cup might pass from him." But not repiningly, not rebelliously. He added, with filial submission, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." Brethren, this example is of infinite worth to us. Dwell upon it in the day of your sorrow. Imitate it in the hour of your trouble. You will not fail to attain something of the peace which the Savior promised to his followers, and which God gives to all those "whose hearts are stayed on him, and who trust in him."

In these various ways may the contemplation of our Lord's example help to guide and support us in the weary pilgrimage of life. Through its vicissitudes of joy and sorrow, duty and suffering, perplexity and fear, it may keep our hearts equal and our faith firm. At its close, it may deliver us from fear, and make us more than conquerors, through

him that hath loved us. And in heaven — it may have helped to prepare us for the peace of that holy rest, which remains for the people of God.

Blessed be God, who hath given us such a Leader! Happy, thrice happy we, if we be enabled successfully to follow him!

SERMON XII.

THE OLD NORTH CHURCH.

HAGGAI II. 3.

WHO IS LEFT AMONG YOU THAT SAW THIS HOUSE IN HER FIRST GLORY?

THE house, my brethren, in which we assemble to worship, has been occupied a hundred years. It was dedicated to that holy service to which it has always been sacred, on the tenth day of May, 1721; a century from which date, allowing for the difference of style, is this very day completed. An epoch so interesting, so fitted to recall the remembrance of past years, and to excite to salutary contemplation on the vicissitudes of a transitory world, and the dispensations of an unchanging God, I am not willing to pass without explicit and large notice. It has been customary in our churches, on such an occasion, to review the way through which God has led them, and recount the history of his providence to their fathers. It is a good custom. And I doubt not, brethren, that you will be interested to go back with me, and trace the story of this church, and the character and doings of its ministers and people. To this object I purpose to devote the discourses of this day; and though none are left that saw the first glory of this house, we may thus all learn what it was — may find that it has at no

period been withdrawn, and is not, even now, wholly departed.

We are not confined, however, in this survey, to the history of the last hundred years, but are led back through the seventy years previous. It is well known to many of you, though probably not to all, that the church in this place is formed by the union of two churches. When the Old North meeting-house, which stood at the head of North Square, had been destroyed by the British troops at the commencement of the revolutionary war, the minister and people united with the minister and people worshiping in this house, and became one church and congregation with them. The late venerable Dr. Lathrop, who so long ministered here, was ordained, not over the church in this place, but over the church in North Square, and became pastor of the church in this place by the transfer of his relation after his own meeting-house had been destroyed. We are, therefore, equally interested in the history of the Old North, as of the New Brick * Church, for it was equally the home of our ancestors. It is a history, too, that deserves our attention; for it was the second religious establishment in this important place, and numbers amongst its ministers some of the remarkable names of New England. To this, therefore, I ask your first attention.

The town of Boston having been settled in 1630, ten years after the landing at Plymouth, the first building for public worship was erected in 1632. This was sufficient for the accommodation of the inhabitants for nearly twenty years. The population had then so increased as to render

* The present building retains its original name of the *New Brick*. The church is known by the style of the *Second Church*, as it was a minister of the Second Church under whom the union was made. The name of the *Old North* is dropped.

another building necessary; and accordingly the people in the north part of the town, which was most populous, built the second meeting-house, at the head of North Square, in 1649.* The church was gathered there on the fifth day of June the next year, and consisted at first of seven members. (1)† A sermon was preached on the occasion by Samuel Mather, — a native of England, but educated at Harvard College, — who was earnestly solicited to remain as pastor of the church; but for reasons of which we know nothing, he went to England, and was for twenty-one years minister in various places, an eminent and respected man. (2) Afterward Mr. Norton, minister of Ipswich, who, two years after, became minister of the First Church in this town, and Mr. Davenport of New Haven, who, seventeen years after, also became minister of the First Church, — both of them among the distinguished men of that period; and "sundry others who were officers in other churches, but likely to remove from the places where they were," ‡ — were invited, unsuccessfully, to take charge of this infant church. For a few years, therefore, one of the brethren, Michael Powell, conducted the worship of God's house, and to such satisfaction that he would have been ordained teacher, had it not been for the interference of the General Court, who "would not suffer one, that was illiterate as to academical education, to be called to the teaching office in such a place as Boston" ‡ — a circumstance which is well worth noticing, as it exemplifies the jealous care with which our fathers guarded the dignity and character of the public institutions of

* I do not find any account of the dedication, and cannot tell whether the meeting-house was first occupied in 1649 or 1650.

† The figures refer to the notes at the end of sermons XII. and XIII.

‡ Church Records.

religion. After four years passed in this state, Mr. John Mayo, who, on account of some "difficulties and discouragements," had left his church at Nosset, in Plymouth colony, was called to the pastoral office here, and ordained the 9th of November, 1655. At the same time, Mr. Powell was ordained as ruling elder of the church. Mr. Powell was soon after incapacitated for all labor by a paralytic affection, and his office became vacant.* I do not find that it was ever again filled.

About this time,† Increase Mather, brother of him before mentioned, returned to this country, and was soon invited to the office of teacher in the Second Church. After two years' hesitation, he accepted, on certain conditions, and was ordained the 27th day of May, 1664.

The pastor and teacher ‡ continued laboring together until the year 1670, when Mr. Mayo's increasing infirmities made it necessary for his ministry to cease. Three years afterward, he removed to Barnstable, and there spent the remainder of his days with his daughter. He died at Yarmouth, in May, 1676, advanced in years, but at what precise age is not known. We have no means of acquainting ourselves with his history or character beyond what is here stated. (3)

After the removal of Mr. Mayo, Dr. Mather held his office

* He died January 28, 1672–3.

† September, 1661.

‡ In the early records of the church, these titles are applied alternately to the ministers as they were settled, evidently without any difference in the nature, tenure, or duties, of the office. Cotton Mather says, (Rat. Disc. p. 42,) that, when the churches had more than one pastor, "one of them formerly was distinguished by the name of *teacher*; though, in regard of their work and their power among these churches, it has been so much *distinctio sine differentia*, that more lately the distinction is less regarded."

alone, until his son, Cotton Mather, was ordained as a colleague, May 13, 1684. During these years, the church appears to have been prosperous, growing with the growth of the town. A great misfortune, however, befell them in the burning of the meeting-house in 1676. (4) It was rebuilt the next year, and then stood for a century. The prosperity of the church, after this event, may be inferred from the circumstance, that within six years it became necessary to build a gallery for the better accommodation of the hearers. (5)

Indeed, the character and reputation of Increase Mather were such, that we should expect to find a crowded attendance on his ministrations. He was one of the eminent men of his times, and few possessed and wielded a wider influence. And, although there were those, as there always will be around an elevated man, especially if he take a leading part in political transactions, who were inimical to his authority, yet in church and state, in religious and in civil affairs, he was looked up to as a leader, equally active, distinguished, and trusted. This was partly owing to the peculiar state of society amongst the early Puritan settlers, who, in their design of forming a "Christian commonwealth," naturally placed much of the power of government in the hands of the rulers of the church; and the authority, which was in the first years exercised by the holy and able ministers who led the feeble colonists,* and by their energy and prayers sustained them in their dark days of fear and danger, continued to abide to the last with Increase Mather. We must not, how-

* No instance of this authority is more remarkable than that of Cotton, minister of the First Church. "Whatever," says Hubbard, "Mr. Cotton delivered was soon put into an order of court, if of a civil, or set up as a practice in the church, if of an ecclesiastical concernment."

ever, attribute too much to the character of the age; much, doubtless, was owing to the rare qualities of the man. For three generations, (6) that family was distinguished by extraordinary gifts. There were many men amongst them on whom nature had bestowed the power to be great, and they evidenced that power in the influence with which they swayed their fellow-men. Increase Mather had his full share of these qualities. Ardent, bold, enterprising, and perhaps ambitious; conscious of his own power, religiously sensible of his obligations to exercise it usefully; born and trained in a young colony struggling with hardships, and forcing its way through peril and fear; his mind fashioned by a father, who for conscience' sake had quitted all and settled in this hopeless land, and who had all the zeal and firmness which characterized the Puritans of that age, a race eminently formed "to do and to dare;" — thus gifted and educated, he became peculiarly fit, and no wonder it was felt that he was fit, to have an ascendency and exercise a control. He had received the best education of his own country; he had completed it abroad; he had been driven from place to place, suffering for his religion, and presented with strong temptations to abandon it, thus acting a hurried and various part in the most trying times in the mother country; and after this discipline, so calculated to give firmness and character, he returned to labor in the service of this infant state. (7) Nothing can be conceived more likely to prepare a man to act well his part in so peculiar a scene. He soon became eminent. Talents, learning, and virtue are always commanding. In that age, a religious spirit was indispensable to honor and power. Mather had all. He was conspicuous for rigid piety where all were rigid, and eminent for talents and knowledge where many had been eminent before him. It therefore is not strange

that he acquired a control to which few are equal, and received and held honors which would not now be bestowed upon ministers.

We find proofs of his ascendency in several remarkable transactions. When King Charles II., in 1683, demanded from the colonies an unqualified resignation of their charters, it was principally by the authority and influence of Increase Mather that the people refused to make the surrender. He not only wrote upon the subject, but went to them in public meeting, and exhorted them not with open eyes to rush upon their ruin, but to do their duty, and trust the event to God.* The example of Boston decided the question throughout the country; and this is one of the early instances in which the lead was taken by this town in those spirited measures of opposition to arbitrary oppression, for which the descendants of the Puritans have been always distinguished. The charter, however, was forfeited; and a governor was sent over† with unlimited authority to make and administer what laws he might please. This authority he exercised in a most oppressive manner; which at length so excited the indignation of the people, that it was resolved to send an agent to England to represent their grievances to the king. (8) No one was found so fitted to this important labor as Dr. Mather, who accordingly sailed for England in April, 1688. During that year, the English revolution took place, and it was not until four years after that he accomplished his commission and returned home. Upon his arrival‡ with a new governor and another charter, the General

* "The clergy," says Hutchinson, "turned the scale for the last time. The balance which they had held from the beginning, they were allowed to retain no longer."

† By James, in 1686.

‡ May 14, 1692.

Court appointed a day of solemn thanksgiving, with honorable mention of his exertions in behalf of the state. But the satisfaction which it yielded him was not unmixed. Many were dissatisfied with the result of his negotiations,* and parties were formed. Some of his old friends forsook him, and he found, like others before him, that the troubles and anxieties of political eminence are very insufficiently compensated by its honors.

But his peculiar distinctions and happiness were in the church. He was eminently fitted for the work of the ministry, and held high rank as a writer and a preacher. His manner is represented to have been grave, dignified, and impressive. He never carried his notes into the pulpit, generally committing his sermons to memory, and oftentimes preaching extempore, — especially during the years in which he was president of the college, when he had little leisure for writing; for so devoted to him were his flock, that they would consent to his holding that office only on the condition that he continued their minister; and when it was made necessary for the president to reside in Cambridge, he resigned the office for his people's sake. (9) His sermons are written in a manly and forcible style, less marked than might be expected by the peculiar faults of the age, and contain passages of the most powerful eloquence. His favorite topics appear to have been those of practical religion, which he inculcated in all the severe strictness and occasional superstition of that age, and with great energy

* His task was, undoubtedly, a very difficult one, and he was himself far from being altogether satisfied with the terms he was able to obtain. This he acknowledges in the pamphlet which he published on the subject, but complains of the unreasonableness of those who accused him of having done nothing, because he had not accomplished all that was desirable.

and warmth. Few sermons present a stronger image of the entire sincerity of the writer, and the anxious workings of his own feelings. They are remarkable for their copious historical illustrations,* which appear to have presented themselves spontaneously to his mind; and not less so for their frequent lamentations over the degeneracy and departing glory of New England. He bewailed, in most pathetic strains, the rapid decline, which he witnessed, from the strictness of the first settlers, and was often sounding the alarm of an exemplary vengeance to overtake that evil and perverse generation. "The interest of New England," he says, "is changed from a religious to a worldly interest." "Such sins as formerly were not known in New England have now become common, such as swearing, sinful gaming, &c.; yea, the present generation, as to the body of it, is an unconverted generation." He elsewhere adds to this catalogue of sins drunkenness, tavern-hunting, even on Saturday evening, and neglect of the Sabbath, the ordinances, and family worship. He cries out also against the lax discipline of the church, and the common substitution of a merely historical belief, for the rigid saving faith which was once regarded as essential. (10) These complaints sound strangely in our ears, who have been taught to believe that the manners of that age were universally pure, and to regard them with veneration, as presenting a model for imitation. But such complaints are made in every age. There are always those that imagine the world is going backward, because it is not guided by their own rule, and does not resemble the picture their fancy has drawn of times that are past. And we should be comforted amidst the lamentations

* This is true as a general remark, though particularly so of his occasional sermons.

of present degeneracy, that they were equally loud a hundred and thirty years ago, and on account, too, of the same sins which are said to be our peculiar curse. No doubt changes were perpetually occurring; and those who had known the country when it consisted, as we may say, of but one little family, would readily imagine every departure from the simplicity and strictness of family discipline and order to be evil; and yet it might be not only unavoidable, but upon the whole advantageous. The anxiety of Mather upon this head is a most honorable proof of his devotion to the welfare of religion and of his country; it was the spirit of genuine piety and patriotism. But it evinced, also, how much he was governed by the impressions of education, and the circumstances of the times in which he lived.

And these had made such impression on his mind, that he looked as fearfully on the growing charity as on the growing vices of the age. He does not appear to have been bigoted or uncandid in his own private feelings. While in London, he tells us, "he did his utmost to promote a union between the Presbyterian and Congregational churches;" and in a neighboring town he assisted to ordain a minister of the Baptist denomination, and spoke with satisfaction of the part he had taken in it. And yet he could declaim loudly against toleration, and pronounce it to be fraught with the deadliest evils. "Toleration," he says, "of all religions and persuasions, is the way to have no religion at all left." "I do believe that Antichrist hath not in this day a more probable way to advance the kingdom of darkness." * (11)

This alarm, in regard to the state and prospects of the country, was mingled with that superstition of the age, which likened the Commonwealth to the commonwealth of

* Election sermon.

Israel, and which accordingly expected perpetual interpositions of Providence in favor or judgment. Every calamity — storm, fire, and sickness — he represented as special visitations of God for the sins of the people, and endeavored, with all the energy of his eloquence, to rouse them to a sense of their sins, that they might by repentance avert the wrath.* On the appearance of the comets in 1680 and 1682, which he verily believed to be the forerunners of calamity, and published a considerable treatise in support of the opinion, (12) he came forward with loud exhortations to repentance and reformation, denouncing the irritated anger of Heaven, and confidently predicting a heavy day of vengeance and darkness.

It is not at all strange, when we consider the character of the times in which he lived, that his ardent and devout mind, which had been trained to "see God in every thing and every thing in God," should be thus affected with superstitious notions of the government of the world and the appearances of the heavens. The strongest and best minds are as liable as others to submit to the prevalent opinions of the age, and their doing so is no proof of deficiency in talents or in judgment. The character of this eminent man stands upon other grounds; and while it can be sustained upon them, it is but a small thing that in some points it partakes of the infirmities of the world in which he moved.

Such was the man by the light of whose instruction and example our church was blessed for more than sixty-two years, and who for sixty-six years was a preacher of the gospel. He died August 23, 1723, in the eighty-fifth year

* His sermons on such occasions were principally preached at the Thursday lecture, and appear to have made an impression, as I find some of them passed through two editions, and some through a third.

of his age — undoubtedly one of the most distinguished men of the day; "one who was indeed a great man while yet but a young man, and a notable preacher of Christ in some of the greatest churches of England and Ireland, before he had been twenty years in the world. A great man, and one adorned with great endowments of knowledge, and learning, and prudence, which qualified him for stations and actions, and even an agency for his country, wherein the most eminent persons in the nation, and three crowned heads, took a kind notice of him." Indeed, whether you consider the extraordinary honors that attended him while living, or the general sentiment which has followed his memory, or consult the writings which he has left behind him, you will pronounce him a man richly endowed by nature, richly furnished by education, and deservedly numbered with the most pious, learned, and useful men of New England. The day of his death was a day of general mourning. An honorable funeral was given him, such as few citizens had been known to receive before, and every testimony of affection and veneration accompanied him to the tomb. The feelings of that day have passed away; the eyes that knew him and wept for him have long been sealed in death; and other generations have risen, and gone by, and been forgotten. But the name of Increase Mather still lives; and when hundreds of generations shall have sunk to irrecoverable oblivion, he shall still be hailed as one of the early worthies of New England.

The most important event relating to these churches, which occurred in the latter part of his ministry, was the division of his church, and the establishment of two new congregations. With the increase of the town, the Old North had become excessively crowded, and inconvenient for the worshipers. A secession accordingly took place,

and the New North was built in 1714. In 1721, a difficulty arose among that people about the settlement of a minister, which issued in a separation and the building of the New Brick. In this difficulty the pastors of the Old North took an almost paternal interest, and the ordination of the first minister of the New Brick was the last which Increase Mather attended. Of these events I shall speak further in another place.

Cotton Mather, who had been colleague with his father for thirty-nine years, survived him but four years and a half. He died, after an illness of five weeks, February 13, 1728, the day after he had completed his sixty-fifth year, having been minister forty-four years. He was a man of equal fame with his father; and although I have already detained you so long, it is impossible to proceed without dwelling at some length on the character of the son.

His original powers of mind were doubtless equal to those of his father, and his industry and learning far superior; but he was deficient in judgment and good taste, and therefore, with all his attainments, became rather an extraordinary than a great man. His character was a very mixed one. You would regard him with wonder and admiration, but hardly with a feeling of entire confidence. His religious sense was as strong as his father's, but it was mingled with more superstition, and was perpetually bordering on fanaticism, and running into the unprofitable observances of the ascetics. The desire of being useful was clearly one of his powerful ruling principles, and few men have formed so extensive systematic designs of active usefulness; yet he injured this by talking too much about it, and by a little too much parade in it. It is not easy to arrive at satisfactory views of his character. There was a mixture in it of so many qualities apparently inconsistent,

some exciting your veneration and some your pity, that it is difficult to arrange them in one view, so as to form a connected whole. While you look with astonishment at his labors, and acknowledge his praiseworthy zeal, you are mortified and vexed to find the most excellent designs frustrated, and the most indefatigable exertions wasted, through the mere want of a discriminating judgment. It makes you melancholy to observe, that, after a life of almost incredible industry; after publishing three hundred and eighty-two books, large and small, and leaving others of vast labor behind him; * after years spent in unwearying efforts to do good, to extend knowledge, and promote religion, which, if well judged, might have placed him in the foremost rank of great men; — his name and works are viewed by posterity rather as phenomena to be talked about, than as substantial blessings.

His principal work, the Magnalia, has been much sought after as a curiosity; and that it has been so regarded is proof sufficient that its merit is quite equivocal. As a storehouse of documents and facts relating to the early history of the country, it may be consulted with advantage; † but it is so strangely written as to become heavy in the reader's hands, and so mingled with the credulity and puerility of the author's own mind, that even Neal, a contemporary writer and correspondent, hardly ventured to cite

* The principal of these is his favorite work, about which he was occupied for many years, *Biblia Americana*, a learned illustration of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. It was proposed, after his death, to publish it in three volumes folio; but the design was dropped for want of sufficient encouragement. It is now in the library of the Historical Society.

† "He knew more of the history of this country," says Dr. Chauncy, "from the beginning to this day, than any man in it, and could he have conveyed his knowledge with proportionable judgment, and the omission of a vain show of much learning, he would have given the best history of it."

him as an authority. Indeed, he was credulous to a deplorable degree of weakness, giving easy credit to all tales of supernatural appearances, providential interposition, and diabolical agency, relating them as matters of sober history, and by his authority and influence feeding the flame of superstition and persecution in which so many unhappy wretches perished on the accusation of witchcraft in 1692. That he not only fell in with this popular delusion, but rather fostered and excited it,* I am afraid is too plain to be doubted. He set his seal to all that was believed and done, to the shame of himself and his country, by publishing on the subject what aided the fury of the times, and will witness against him to the latest generation.

* I confess I have not been able to see so clearly into this matter as I could desire. The whole history of that delusion, it appears to me, lies very much in the dark. In regard to the agency of Cotton Mather, I presume it will not be questioned, though it may not be easy to decide precisely what was its nature or extent. Neal makes it evident that he favored the delusion; and Watts, in a letter to Mather, tells him, "Mr. Neal hopes you will forgive him that he has not fallen into your sentiments exactly." — *Hist. of N. E.* vol. i. *Hist. Coll.* vol. v. — But there is no necessity of going so far for testimony, while we have his "Wonders of the Invisible World," — the work to which I have alluded above. Mr. Brattle, of Cambridge, in a letter published in the Historical Collections, says that Increase Mather "did utterly condemn" the proceedings of this period; and that "the reverend elders throughout the country, except three, are very much dissatisfied." Cotton Mather is not named as one of the three, and therefore, probably, when this letter was written, had changed his opinion. For he did finally acknowledge, in writing, that things had been urged too far. Yet, in the life of his father, written thirty-two years after the delusion was at its height, he expressed his firm belief that all was to be attributed to supernatural agency. I wish it were clear that he did not do more than any one in urging this belief to its fatal consequences.

As a preacher, he differed much from his father; having less strength, and more rhapsody, less dignity, and more declamation. The quaintness and singularity of his style was not well suited to the gravity of the pulpit, and appears to have been a subject of complaint even during his lifetime.* And yet there was so much warmth and zeal, so much earnestness and sincerity, so evident and pious longing to do good, "his spirits were so raised and all on fire," — to use the expression of one who knew him well,† — that his faults seem to have disappeared in his excellences, and his preaching was impressive and effective. He seems to have been fond of dwelling on doctrinal subjects. "He was a vigorous defender," says his colleague, "of the reformed doctrines of grace, and of the mysteries of revealed religion, which he ever regarded as the excelling glory of the Christian dispensation." In other words, he was a zealous Calvinist, and it is certain that he was quite thorough in its creed. He did not forbear to state its tenets in their most contradictory and revolting form, — as if he gloried in being able to set them before him in full array, and thought to magnify the merit of that faith, which could receive them notwithstanding their intrinsic difficulties.‡

He was as zealous in his adherence to the Congregational

* Neal complains, in a letter to Dr. Colman, of "the puns and jingles that attend all his writings;" and Mr. Prince, in his funeral sermon, says, that "in his style he was somewhat singular, and not so agreeable to the gust of the age."

† Funeral sermon, by Mr. Prince.

‡ This remark will be found principally exemplified in a sermon on election and reprobation, and his "Address" on Quakerism, entitled *Little Flocks guarded against grievous Wolves;* also, in the complaints which he makes in the Magnalia of Baxter's departing, in some respects, from the strictness of the Calvinistic faith.

mode of church discipline, as to the articles of his creed. This was a matter of great interest at the early periods of our history, when all remembered it freshly as the cause in which their fathers were driven from their homes, and were exceeding jealous of any attempt to innovate in matters of discipline, or to introduce, under any pretence, the burdens of the Episcopal church. "No church upon earth," he says, "so notably makes the terms of communion run parallel with the terms of salvation." * It was through this watchful and suspicious fear of innovation that the church was induced, in 1697, to send a letter of admonition to the church in Charlestown, "for betraying the liberties of the churches by putting into the hands of the whole inhabitants the choice of a minister." (13)

The sentiments which he expressed concerning toleration were much more just and rational than those which I have quoted from his father, and mark the growing liberality of the age. "Persecution," he says, "for conscientious dissents in religion is the abomination of desolation; a thing whereof all wise and just men will say, 'Cursed be its anger, for it is fierce, and its wrath, for it is cruel.'" † He says elsewhere that he "abhors it; has preached against it, and writ against it; he would have the Quakers treated with all imaginable civility, and not have the civil magistrate inflict the damage of a farthing for their consciences." With an inconsistency, however, perhaps not very rare, he refrained from all "civility" in his own treatment of them, and took every occasion to abuse them and make them odious.‡ He is not, however, the only man who has imagined nothing

* Letter to Lord Barrington.

† Right Hand of Fellowship, at the ordination of Mr. Prince, 1718.

‡ See divers passages in the Magnalia, and his Address, or Quakerism Displayed, which abounds with something like scurrility.

short of imprisonment and the stake to be persecution. There are many, who, with the utmost virulence, have gone on destroying reputation and influence, while they were sedately talking of toleration and the rights of conscience, — as if they thought, with some theorists on government, that life, liberty, and property are the only good of man, and that influence and a good name, which make life, liberty, and property worth having, may be wantonly taken away without injustice.

In the contrast which I have mentioned, between what is to be admired and what is to be deplored, it would not be strange if we erred in our estimate of his character. His foibles thrust themselves upon our notice, and will not be hidden, — while to learn what should redeem them, we must be acquainted with all the history and habits of the man. That there was something in these to redeem them, is clear from the great influence he sustained both in church and state, notwithstanding his palpable imperfections. He was more than once instrumental of great good to the state by this influence in times of excitement and confusion; and in the church he was certainly an object of great respect; and in spite of his assuming, to say the least, all the consequence that belonged to him, yet he was able to retain that consequence. Still it is clear, on the other hand, that it was then felt that something was wanting to complete the man; for in two vacancies * in the presidency of the college, when his unquestioned learning, and talents, and age gave him a clear claim to the office, and the people, who regarded him as a prodigy, called aloud for his election, yet the place was

* In 1706, when President Leverett was chosen, and in 1725, when Dr. Colman, Dr. Sewall, and Mr. Wadsworth were successively elected.

denied him, and given to men his inferiors in every respect, except judgment. This failing was palpable, and universally admitted, and this prevented him from being one of the greatest of men.

From his very childhood he had been distinguished by his attachment to religion and to books. He was graduated at the age of sixteen, the next year joined his father's church, and began to preach when eighteen, having, by great pains, cured himself of a stammering in his speech, which once threatened to forbid him the profession. His ministerial gifts were at once appreciated, and having been for some time assistant to his father, he was ordained as his colleague May 13, 1685. (14) In this situation, the arduous duties of which he was far from slighting or neglecting, he was able to read and write more than any man probably ever did in America. "There were scarcely any books written," says Dr. Chauncy, "but he had some how or other got a sight of them. He was the greatest redeemer of time I ever knew." This was the opinion expressed by all who knew him, and it gained for him many honors, and an extensive correspondence among distinguished men abroad.

In the duties of the ministerial office he appears to have been eminently faithful and successful. He was much in the habit of private admonition and instruction, endeavoring, in his own peculiar way, to start some advice or reproof from every occurrence, and perpetually inventing new devices for doing good. "To do all the good he could to all," says one * who knew him intimately, "was his maxim, his study, his labor, his pleasure." — He was full of private labors to this end, and he favored and assisted many public institutions for this object. It was he that, in spite of obloquy,

* Mr. Prince.

insults, and threats, introduced the practice of inoculation for the small-pox as a bar to the fatal ravages of that disease; and, with the same ardor and disinterestedness, gave his time to other purposes of public good, civil, as well as moral and religious. A book, which he wrote upon this subject of doing good,* is perhaps his most valuable work. Dr. Franklin attributed to it all his usefulness and eminence in life; and I think no one could read it without receiving enlarged notions of his capacity and obligation to do good, and being stimulated to better attempts. With these active works of religion, he united an austerity of private discipline, that would have honored a monastery. He kept frequent days of fasting, and nights of watching, sometimes for two and even three days together — regularly once a month, and occasionally once a week.

But it is impossible to proceed in particulars. I have gone far enough to show what I intended, that, notwithstanding his great defects, which strike you at first view, and cannot be concealed, he absolutely was, as he was always acknowledged to be, a most wonderful man. It is barely doing him justice to say, in the language of his colleague,† that "the capacity of his mind, the readiness of his wit, the vastness of his reading, the strength of his memory, the variety and treasures of his learning, in printed works and in manuscripts, which contained a much greater share; the splendor of virtue, which, through the abundant grace of God, shone out in the constant tenor of a most entertaining and profitable conversation; his uncommon activity, his unwearied application, his extensive zeal, and

* "Essays to do Good." It has been republished within a few years, at Boston.

† Mr. Gee's sermon on his death.

numberless projects of doing good; these things, as they were united in him, proclaimed him to be truly an extraordinary person." When he died, it was felt as a public loss, and he was honored with a funeral of uncommon splendor. He was mourned, according to Dr. Colman's expression, "as the first minister in the town — the first in age, in gifts, and in grace — the first in all the provinces of New England for universal literature and extensive services." (15)

Cotton Mather was alone in the care of the church only four months during his whole ministry, Joshua Gee being ordained colleague with him soon after the death of his father. Mr. Gee is represented on all hands as having been a very superior man — not possessing popular talents, but of great profoundness and learning, excelling in argument, and capable of rising to any height of excellence; but, unhappily, of an indolent habit, which prevented his making that use of his advantages which would have secured to him the ascendency for which he seems to have been formed. His character was particularly marked with zeal and fervor. He was somewhat bigoted to high Calvinism, and somewhat bitter in controversy. He was an earnest promoter of the religious excitement which prevailed throughout the country after Whitefield's first visit, and refused to open his eyes to the evils which attended it, even after many of its friends had become convinced of their existence. And when the convention, in 1743, felt it a duty to bear testimony against certain errors in doctrine and practice, which prevailed to the great confusion of the churches, he warmly, and rather passionately, opposed them, and was the occasion of a separate convention in the following July, which issued a counter testimony. (16) With all his great qualities, he was, as this transaction proves, rash and over-ardent; so

that Dr. Chauncy, who knew him well, said, "it was happy Mr. Gee had an indolent turn; for with such fiery zeal, and such talents, he would have made continual confusion in the churches."

His ministry in this church continued for twenty-five years. He had been an invalid for many years, and died, after a lingering illness, May 22, 1748, in the fifty-first year of his age. (17)

He enjoyed the society of his venerable colleague but four years. When, at his death, the people looked round for one to succeed him, their choice fell upon his son, Samuel Mather, who was ordained over them June 21, 1732, about four years after his father's death. (18) He was recommended to them, not only by their respect for the ancient family, but by his own character for diligence, zeal, and learning, of which he certainly possessed an uncommon share. He had already made himself known by several publications, especially by his life of his father. He continued in the ministry but nine years, when, on account of some dissatisfaction with his preaching, which was thought by some to be not sufficiently explicit upon certain points of doctrine, together with some other grounds of uneasiness, a division took place in the church, and he with one party withdrew, and erected a separate place of worship. This was in 1740 and '41, and possibly had some connection with the religious excitements of that period, about which his colleague, Mr. Gee, was so zealous. He continued to be the minister of a separate congregation until his death, at the advanced age of seventy-nine years.* By his own directions he received a private funeral. Most of those who at that time were worshiping with him, returned to this church; and some are with us still.

* June 27, 1785.

After the removal of Mr. Mather, Gee remained sole pastor, until, in his declining health, Samuel Checkley was united with him the year before his death. (19) He was the son of an eminent minister of the New South church, and is said to have been distinguished for a peculiar sort of eloquence, and an uncommon felicity in the devotional service of public worship. He published nothing, except one sermon on the death of Mrs. Lydia Hutchinson, and left the records of the church so imperfect, that little can be learned from them of its state and fortunes during his connection with it. He died, after a ministry of twenty-one years, on the 19th of March, 1768.

He was succeeded in the ministry by the late Dr. Lathrop, (20) whom you well knew, and whom all that knew honored. During his ministry, the Old North meeting-house was destroyed, and the church and congregation, formed a union with those worshiping in this house.

Having thus brought down the account of the ancient church to the period of the union, I leave it for the present, that I may resume it in the afternoon, when I shall first have followed the history of the New Brick to the same period.

SERMON XIII.

THE NEW BRICK CHURCH.

HAGGAI II. 3.

WHO IS LEFT AMONG YOU THAT SAW THIS HOUSE IN HER FIRST GLORY?

I THIS morning spoke to you of the origin, establishment, and history of the Old North church, and of the lives and characters of its ministers, until its union with the New Brick, at the close of the revolutionary war. I now go on to a similar account of the New Brick church. It originated in circumstances not very honorable or happy. It had its birth, not from the regular overflow of increasing population; nor was it a separation of brethren in the spirit of Christian love; but it was the offspring of heated passions and violent dissension. The circumstances, as far as can be positively ascertained, or are important to be known, appear to have been the following: —

The New North church was established in 1714. It was regularly and peaceably gathered in the necessary course of a growing population. They had ordained one minister, the Rev. John Webb, and, agreeably to the custom of the times, were desirous of settling another in connection with him. In consequence of some irregularities in the proceedings of those who were most active in the affair, "they

fell," as their records express it, "into unhappy and divided circumstances." The principal ground of division was in regard to inviting a minister already settled. Many desired to call to this place Mr. Peter Thacher, then over the church in Weymouth, a preacher of great popularity. Others esteemed it contrary to Congregational usage and principles; and in this dispute, fermented probably by private and local circumstances, of which we have little account, their passions became heated, and they approached at last, in a state of exasperation which gave little promise of unanimity, to the choice of a minister. The choice fell upon Mr. Thacher, which was ratified in the congregation by a majority of one, and that, it is said, was obtained by the casting vote of the minister. A great storm of trouble ensued. The ministers of the town, who unanimously agreed in disapproving the measures of the majority, interfered, and advised a reference of their difficulties to a council. This not being done, they gave the church to understand that they wished not to be invited to attend at the ordination. The ordaining council was composed of only two ministers, one of whom came with the consent of his church, accompanied by delegates; and the other alone, in opposition to the vote of his church. The most violent attempts were made to prevent their proceeding, and it was only by being conducted by a private passage, that the council obtained possession of the meeting-house. Here a scene of the most outrageous and disgraceful tumult occurred. It is difficult to give credit to all the stories of the indecencies which were acted there; it is certain, however, that after one more ineffectual attempt at a mutual council, the ordination proceeded in the midst of a disorder little inferior to the uproar in the theatre at Ephesus. The discontented members separated themselves, to the number of

forty, and in the course of the next year erected the building in which we now worship. (1)

This house was dedicated on the 10th of May, 1721. A day of prayer and fasting was kept on the occasion, and two discourses were delivered, one by Cotton Mather, many of whose congregation were engaged in the new design, and the other by Mr. Wadsworth, minister of the first church, and afterward president of Harvard College. The house appears to have been regarded, at that time and for many years after, as a building of uncommon elegance and taste. The preacher expressed only the common opinion, when he said, "I suppose there is not in all the land a more beautiful house built for the worship of God, than this whereof you now appear to make a dedication to the Lord. But what will it signify," he added, "if the beauty of holiness be wanting?" A church was gathered amongst the worshipers, May 22, of the next year, consisting of ten persons, six of whom were from the New North, and three of them had been original members of that church. (2) One of the deacons chosen at this time, Thomas Lee, lived to be ninety years old, and died in 1769, having survived all the original members of this church and congregation.

On the same day, William Waldron was ordained the first pastor. (3) His ministry was short. being only of five years' continuance, when he died at the age of thirty. The interests of the church appear to have flourished beneath his care. If we may judge by the representations of those who knew him, he was a man of uncommon promise. In the many sermons which were published on occasion of his death,* he is spoken of, not in the language of common-

* I have in my possession a volume containing sermons on the occasion, by C. Mather, Webb, Foxcroft, (with a dedication by Cooper,) and Wadsworth. Samuel Mather also published a sermon.

place eulogy, but in the genuine accents of unaffected lamentation, and sincere respect and love. There appears to have been a mixture of the severity and simplicity of an apostle with affability and urbanity, which secured to him respect as a minister and warm attachment as a friend. Ministerial courage was an eminent trait of his character, and this was united, as you might expect to find it, with great activity in the service of the gospel. His death appears to have excited a very unusual sympathy, not solely, it would seem, on account of his own distinguished worth, but as "he was the youngest minister by fourteen or fifteen years that had yet died in Boston," and because there had been, for several preceding years, a succession of deaths among the younger ministers almost as remarkable as that which has desolated our churches for the last twenty years.* These circumstances doubtless contributed, together with the rapidity of his disease, to produce the deep and general feeling with which he was lamented.†

* "We have seen, within these few years, many other sorrowful instances of early death among those of the ministerial order, and many more among Christians of a private character. I could reckon up above a dozen in the ministry, that have, in a few years past, been removed by mortality in their youth, or in the meridian of their days, who were all useful in their places, and some of them eminently so. — *Foxcroft's Sermon.*

He gives, in a note, a list of twenty-one who had lately died within the state, of whom "several were under thirty, and the most not above forty." Within what period of time, it is not stated. Mr. Cooper, refering to the same mortality, says, "The removal of valuable and excellent persons is, alas! no uncommon thing in this *land of dying.*" C. Mather, in the preface to his sermon, speaks in a similar strain.

† Foxcroft says, "I find his death as much regretted amongst us as almost any I have known;" and Cotton Mather speaks of the "sorrow, yea, a general, a very uncommon sorrow."

After an interval of about six months, William Welsteed, who had been for some time a respected tutor at the college, was invited to fill the place vacated by the death of Mr. Waldron, and was ordained on the 27th day of May, 1728. He preached his own ordination sermon. He continued to hold the office of pastor singly for a little more than ten years, when Mr. Ellis Gray was united with him as a colleague; in which relation they remained together fifteen years. (4)

During this period of time, I am unable to say particularly what was the state of the congregation. I cannot learn that it was remarkably flourishing or remarkably otherwise; but it probably enjoyed about the ordinary share of prosperity. The two pastors were not among the most distinguished in town, though faithful and highly respectable men. During the great religious excitements of this period, they appear to have fallen in with the current. I find, however, from a well-written, serious, animated sermon, delivered in 1742, at an ordination, by Mr. Gray, that he was fully aware of the dangers and evils of that period, and did not hesitate to speak of the "discord, division, bitterness, clamor, wrath, evil-speaking, groundless surmises and jealousies," which prevailed in the churches. Neither of the ministers, however, were among the leaders on either side, though possibly it was to his opinion on this subject that Welsteed alluded, when he said, in his last illness, "I have in some things thought differently from my brethren, but I thank God I have constantly meant well."

It was at this period, that our evening lecture before the communion was established;* and at the same time, the season of the communion was changed from every fourth

* March 15, 1741.

week, to the first Sabbath of every month. After two months, however, the vote was reconsidered, and the old term of rotation restored, which continues unchanged to the present time. It was during this period, the year after the ordination of Mr. Welsteed,* that the custom was dropped of singing by the separate reading of each line. In 1735, after much debate, it was determined to have two ruling elders in the church — an office which had become almost obsolete, and which, after this attempt to revive it, sunk forever.† In 1751, (July 10,) Watts's Psalms and Hymns were introduced in the worship of the Sabbath, and continued in use until superseded by Belknap's Collection, in 1817, (Nov. 9,) — a period of sixty-six years.

The circumstances attending the death of these two ministers were remarkable and melancholy. Gray died suddenly on Lord's day, January 7, 1753, in the thirty-seventh year of his age and fifteenth of his ministry. We have little means of knowing intimately his character; but he is represented to us as a man much respected, of early and uniform piety, remarkably given to hospitality, and directing his life, says Samuel Mather,‡ as if he had perpetually in view Paul's description of his own conversation — "that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshy wisdom, but by the grace of God, he had his conversation in the world." If we might judge of his gifts in preaching by the two sermons which I have seen, we should assign him quite a

* July 31, 1729.

† This matter of the ruling elders was debated at numerous church meetings from March 17, 1735, to November 11, 1736; at which time only one person (Deacon James Halsy) had been found to accept the office, and the church at last voted not to choose another.

‡ Sermon after the death of Welsteed and Gray.

respectable rank as a writer, and as a man of talents and piety.

His colleague, Welsteed, survived him not quite four months. He died on the 29th of April, having been struck with palsy the preceding Sunday, just after the commencement of the morning service, having lived fifty-seven years, and been minister twenty-five. Here was the melancholy spectacle of a church in mourning for two pastors at once, both cut off suddenly in the midst of life. And to render the visitation yet more affecting, they both died of the same disease; both died on the Sabbath, on the communion Sabbath, at the same time of day; each having preached for the last time to his own people, and the last sermon preached by both being on the same subject — "redeeming the time, because the days are evil."*

Welsteed is characterized as a man of eminent sincerity and integrity, "good-natured, contented, patient, and always ready to every good office of morality and religion, and conscientiously diligent in his ministerial labors, especially in his preparation for the pulpit." In preaching, it was remarked of him, that "he was careful not to insist on those points, about which wise and good Protestants have different sentiments;" but confined himself to "those doctrines of religion, which are not disputed amongst sound Protestants, and the impressive duties of repentance, faith, love, and universal and constant obedience." This sufficiently expresses to us the nature of his views of religion, and it is corroborated by the circumstance that he derived particular support, in his last days, "from his upright walk before the Lord, and his *consciousness* of it." This fact is mentioned by the preacher, on his death, with emphasis, as if to mark the character of his faith.*

* S. Mather's sermon.

After the death of Gray and Welsteed, the pastoral office was vacant eleven months, and was then filled by the instalment of Ebenezer Pemberton, previously minister of a Presbyterian church in New York, and a preacher of uncommon popularity, who attracted crowds by his captivating manner. In the earlier part of his life, he had been chaplain at Castle William, and in 1727 * had been ordained minister of a Presbyterian church in New York. The ordination took place in the Old South church, and Dr. Colman preached. After a ministry in that city of twenty-two years, he, together with his colleague, Alexander Cumming, were obliged to relinquish their places on account of dissensions in the congregation, although it is said they took no part in the disputes. This was during the vacancy occasioned by the death of Mr. Welsteed, and he was soon invited to succeed him. The installation took place the 6th of March, 1754, and his ministry lasted twenty-three years. (5)

It was during his ministry that the Old North meeting-house was destroyed; and when the inhabitants returned to their homes, after the evacuation of the town, this meeting-house being sufficiently large to accommodate both congregations, they worshiped together for three years, and then a junction was formed, which has proved perpetual. (6) Dr. Pemberton died before this event, at the advanced age of seventy-two.† During the last years of his life, he had lost that extraordinary popularity which followed him at first, and his manner was thought to be even so disagreeable, that the congregation in consequence became extremely thin. He was esteemed, however, as a faithful minister, and is stated to have been particularly remarkable for a

* August 9. † September 15, 1777.

"fervid kind" of piety. "He vehemently aspired after the spirit of the gospel, and had the consolations of it during a long and trying sickness." * He was a strict Calvinist, the last minister of that faith in this church, in his earlier days exceeding zealous against heretics, though in later life he grew more candid. In these particulars he resembled Whitefield, of whom he was a warm admirer and adherent, and whose eulogy he pronounced at his death. He was not a man of remarkable powers of mind, but well acquainted with books, and had the command of a style not only correct, but elegant and oftentimes beautiful. He published a volume of sermons a few years before his death, on salvation by grace, which, besides the ordinary views of that subject, which you might expect from one of his faith, contain many appeals and exhortations that are not wanting in pathos and power.

When Dr. Lathrop took charge of these churches, after their union, he had been ordained over the Old North eleven years; and he afterward accomplished a faithful and honorable ministry of thirty-nine years. Of his life, character, and labors, you do not need, brethren, that I should speak to you; for they are familiar to your memories. Many of you have grown up from childhood under his ministry, and retain for him a filial and affectionate respect; and all can remember his venerable and serene old age, when for years he presented the only hoary head that appeared in our pulpits, was the father amidst a numerous clergy much younger than himself, and became an object of increasing interest and value as he drew nearer his home. No one, who ever knew him at all, can forget the benignity of his appearance, the apostolical simplicity of his char-

* Dr. Eliot, Biog. Dictionary.

acter, his gentleness and affectionateness of disposition, and his devotion to the best interests of his country and of man. After a long life, in which he gave himself much to public cares, and was the faithful patron of many of our best institutions, he passed to his reward on the fourth day of January, 1816, at the age of seventy-six years.

His successor was ordained on the first day of the next year. (7) The history of the remaining time I need not repeat. It has been a season of tranquillity and prosperity, for which we should be devoutly thankful. And I congratulate you, my brethren, that the century, which began in discord and strife, we have seen close in perfect harmony; that the congregations, which separated from each other with hostile feelings and enkindled passions, we see walking together in love, and minding the things that make for peace, and uniting, as sister churches, in the nearest offices of Christian fellowship. Long, long may this continue; never may it be interrupted; may no greetings, but those of love, ever pass between them; — but when, century after century, to the end of time, this day shall come round, may they be still found striving together only in love and good works — with one faith, one Lord, one baptism, one God and Father of all.

We have thus looked back upon the history of this united church through a series of one hundred and seventy years. We have traced its ancient branch from that time, when there was but one other in the town, and when the whole neighboring country, instead of a flourishing land of civilized inhabitants, presented to view only an uncultivated desert, trodden by savages, with here and there a few settlements, which had been reared as cities of refuge for persecuted Puritans, — who tilled the fields with their armor girded on, and kept their Sabbaths and their fasts with

muskets by their sides. From that perilous and romantic period we have traced it, step by step, seeing it grow under the abundant blessing of Heaven, and the toils of celebrated men, till it has sent off one after another company to erect new altars to the Most High, and at length blended itself with a younger church, which it had favored in a day of weakness and fear, and then received again to its bosom the remnant of those, who had once gone from it in the day of division. We have traced the other branch from its birth, precisely a century ago, and followed it through the various discipline of God's judgment and mercy; till at length it was reconciled to its sister, and received beneath its roof its venerable ancestor; and now, to-day, we rejoice together in the way through which God has led us these forty years of our union. We notice the vicissitudes of the world, the flight of time, the providence of God toward our land, and gather lessons of wisdom from a consideration of the past. We look up to Him who planted and watered this vine, and has caused successive generations to see its beauty and partake of its fruit, and exclaim with the pious king of Israel, *The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers; let him not leave us nor forsake us!*

In the period which we have been thus surveying, two changes have taken place of such magnitude and importance, that they cannot escape our observation. The first is in regard to the observance of the ordinances of our faith. In the days of our fathers, the number of those, who felt so far bound to their religion as to observe its peculiar rites, was much larger than amongst ourselves. During the ministry of the Mathers, the average number of those annually admitted to the communion of the church was twenty; in several years, rising above fifty and in that preceding the death of Cotton Mather, amounting to seventy-one. The

number during his ministry was eight hundred and forty-eight — more than the whole number of communicants for the last seventy years. With respect to the other ordinance, the difference is quite as remarkable. The number of baptisms during the last thirty-nine years of the period just mentioned, was three thousand three hundred and eighty-four; being a yearly average of eighty-six, and rising, in several instances, to more than one hundred and thirty. This shows the difference of Christian fidelity in regard to the positive appointments of religion. Not that there is probably less real Christianity. There is no reason to believe that the general mass of the community is worse in faith or in practice than at that time; in many respects, it is certainly better. But in those days, there was a strict adherence to all the forms and external observances of the gospel, on which it was the character of their faith to lay peculiar stress; whilst we are too much satisfied with a very general regard to what we call the *spirit* of religion, and are prone to undervalue its positive institutions. So that, while our places of public worship are as fully and seriously attended, and the purposes of Christianity, in ordinary life, as well accomplished, the table of the Lord witnesses a thinner attendance,* and more of our children grow up without baptism. It is undoubtedly a better understanding of the nature of our Lord's kingdom, which elevates the spirit above the form. But why will not men

* Though I speak here in general terms, I refer particularly to this church; for I am not able to decide how far it may be warranted as a general remark. I know myself of many exceptions. To take, for example, the church in West Boston: it appears from a sermon lately published by the pastor, that the admissions to that church for the last sixteen years have been twenty on an average; which is equal to the best days of the Mathers.

learn, that they may avoid one extreme without rushing to the other? When will they feel the force of that admonition of our blessed Lord — *These ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone?*

The other change to which I alluded is that which has taken place in the views of religious faith, which have been here presented and professed. This is a most important and happy change. The church was established on those doctrines, into which men settled when they first broke from the Romish domination, which had been confirmed amidst the passion and excitements of contention with the English hierarchy, and were finally set in an authorized form during the violent storms of a civil and religious war. These doctrines our ancestors held, and the founders of this church received them as they were fashioned and exhibited by the assembly of divines at Westminster. One of the eminent Puritans, the minister of the first company of pilgrims, had warned our fathers not to bind themselves to the faith as then established. His great mind perceived that the reformation was not yet accomplished. He was assured, he said, that God had still more light to break forth from his holy word; and he exhorted them not to stick where Calvin and Luther had left them, for they saw not all things. And yet, for a long time, there they did stick. But at length the light he had predicted broke forth, and the eyes of one church after another were opened. For nearly fifty years, the doctrines of Calvin have not been heard within these walls; but a milder, happier faith has won sinners to heaven, and comforted the hearts that tremble at God's word. Brethren, I congratulate you on the change. I rejoice with you that we are not bound down to any form of words of human device, nor enslaved, by the fear of man, to any set of opinions published to the world by

pope, council, or assembly. I joy with you, that we can say to-day, "*The Bible only is our creed;* we drink from none but this fountain of living waters; we have not committed, and we will not commit, either of the two evils, the forsaking this, or the going to other cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." You cannot value your privilege too highly. If there be any loud call for your gratitude to-day, it is for this blessing, in which it has pleased God to distinguish you beyond your fathers. And I entreat you, consider, if they, less favored in the rights of conscience and the inestimable blessing of religious liberty, were yet so devoted and zealous men, of whom the world was not worthy, — consider what manner of persons you ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness. Put not from you their love of the Scriptures, their faithful attendance on the public and private worship of God, their eminent and firm attachment to principle, their fidelity in the religious education of their children. Let it never be said, that with increasing privileges there is a decreasing religion. But, as you hope at last to join them in that world, where your errors and their errors shall be alike removed, and all shall see with one eye, let it not be then found, that with your better knowledge you have fallen short in the race, while their higher attainments rise up to your shame and condemnation.

The occasion reminds us what a changing and dying world we live in. This house has stood for a hundred years; *and who is there left among you that saw it in its first glory?* Every one of the crowd that thronged it then has long since departed to his eternal home. Five successive ministers have labored here, and gone to their account. Even in the memory of many present, every seat has changed its occupant. You seek the friends whom you once met here, and they are gone. Time has more than

once swept clean these seats; and how soon will it be done again! The celebration of a day like this no man can hope to see twice. When Xerxes looked upon his immense army, and thought that in a hundred years not one of that multitude would be living, he was overcome by the reflection, and wept aloud. I would not have you *weep*, brethren, as the same thought passes your mind in looking round you now, — for the Christian in his church should regard time and death with other views than the heathen at his army's head, — but I would to God you would pause and consider. The time is short. A century! What is a century? Ask the man of eighty, who has almost seen that term, and he will tell you it is as yesterday when it is past; it is but as a day and a night, and he that has survived it does not feel that he has lived longer than when he had lived but twenty years. Yet in that space what changes occur! The strong men and women, and the very children of this assembly, shall in that time be no more numbered among the living; the youngest child here, yea, the very infant that we have this day offered in baptism shall have witnessed all the fortunes of life, and perhaps worn a gray head for years, and perchance grown weary of a helpless and burdensome old age, and then slumbered for years in the mighty congregation of the dead, before a century shall close. In a century, cities flourish and decay, the boundaries of nations are broken up, and the earth changes all its inhabitants again and again. Observe what has taken place just around you during that which has now passed. Instead of eleven churches in this town, you find twenty-eight, and all have been built or rebuilt within that time excepting two.* You find a flourishing city instead of a small town, a sovereign state

* The New Brick and the Old South.

for a dependent colony, a mighty nation for a few scattered provinces. And who can number the changes in the old eastern world! — the improvements that have carried the sciences and arts to an unequalled perfection, and the convulsions and revolutions that have removed again and again the landmarks of empire, and elevated the low and depressed the high amongst the nations, like the heaving of the earth in the throes of an earthquake! All this has been; and yet what is a century? He that should have lived through all, and look on the world in its present state, would almost feel as if the whole had been effected in a moment, by the wand of enchantment: — the time has fled like a dream. What, then, will time be to those, who know, as we do, that we have probably a small part of such a period to live! O that we might learn so to number our days, that we should apply our hearts unto wisdom!

Finally, brethren, permit me to congratulate you on the prosperous condition in which this day finds you. These walls have stood a hundred years, — and they still stand firm. Whilst you have seen most of your sister churches compelled to destroy the ancient temples, in which they and their fathers had worshiped, lest they should fall upon them in ruins, and burdened with the costly labor of rearing other places of worship, you have the privilege of still assembling in this house of your ancestors, consecrated by age, and by the devout breathings of great and pious men of the times that are gone by; where the word of life has been preached to four successive generations, where every spot is hallowed as your appropriate religious home, and the very ground on which you stand is holy. There is something solemnly pleasing in the thought, that the walls which are echoing back the voice of your preacher and the songs of your praise, have resounded with those of venerable men, whose praise

is in all the churches, that have long been sleeping in the dust, and are strangers to all themes but those of religion. And there is something delightful in the hope, that our children and children's children shall sit where we have been sitting, and seek the inspiration of Heaven on the same spot where we have found it. This hope, my friends, is yours. God, it is true, may commission his elements, and they shall shake this house to its foundations at once. The earthquake and storm have hitherto assailed it in vain, and it has thrice been rescued from devouring flames.* Another visitation may destroy it without remedy. But in the ordinary course of Providence it may see this day return, and listen to the devout thanksgivings of those who shall assemble here — without one of us amongst them — to celebrate the mercy of Him, who, in the midst of change and death, is forever the same. And when that day shall come, O, may it find our children wiser, and purer, and worthier than we. If God have any more light to break forth from his Word, may it be theirs to see it and rejoice in it. And we too will rejoice in it, — as we doubt not the spirits of the good men that came up here to dedicate this house are rejoicing in the greater light which God has poured upon us. May that day find all the darkness of error and superstition which clouds *our* faith removed, and all the sins which defile *our* lives banished, and as many surrounding the table of their Lord, as worship at the altar of their God. Happy they that shall see that day! Thrice happy they that shall walk in that light! Yea, happy even these

* A memorandum of Deacon Tudor, in 1779, informs us that "the sudden judgments of an earthquake, terrible storm, and fire have all three *done damage* to the meeting-house within his remembrance;" and records three instances in which it was in imminent danger of being consumed by fire.

venerable walls, that shall have witnessed the gathering knowledge and growing virtue of many generations, and shall then hear prayers of warmer devotion, and the outpouring of hearts lifted nearer to heaven, and shall learn something of that purer and more perfect worship, which is to be the employment and glory of the temple above! In that temple there shall be no change of day and night, and no revolution of time; a thousand years shall be but as one uninterrupted day; and no returning century shall warn us that life is drawing nearer to its close — for that life shall have no close. In that glorious temple, in that unchanging day, may it be our happiness to meet those venerable saints, who have crowded these courts before us, and the multitude of our posterity, who shall have received the beginning of that life on this spot, where their fathers worshiped. This is our heart's desire and prayer — that the power of the gospel may always be exhibited here in preparing men for salvation.

"And in that great, decisive day,
When God the nations shall survey,
May it before the world appear,
THOUSANDS WERE BORN TO GLORY HERE!"

NOTES TO SERMON XII.

(1) p. 155. The names of those first gathered in the church were, Michael Powell, James Ashwood, Christopher Gibson, John Philips, George Davis, Michael Wills, John Farnham. The original covenant is an instrument of some length, not at all in the manner of articles of faith, but simply an expression of unworthiness, of dependence on Jesus Christ, and of resolutions to walk agreeably to the gospel. The form, which was adopted and used in the reception of members afterward, was in these words: —

"You do, in this solemn presence, give up yourself, even your whole self, you and yours, to the true God in Jesus Christ, and to his people also, according to the will of God, promising to walk with God, and with this church of his, in all his holy ordinances, and to yield obedience to every truth of his, which has been or shall be made known to you as *your* duty, the Lord assisting you by his Spirit and grace.

"We, then, the church of Christ, in this place, do receive you into the fellowship, and promise to walk towards you, and to watch over you as a member of this church, endeavoring your spiritual edification in Christ Jesus our Lord."

(2) p. 155. Samuel Mather was the son of Richard Mather, who came from England, for conscience' sake, in 1635, and was for many years a worthy minister in Dorchester. He was nine years old when he accompanied his father to New England, and was in the [illegible] class that was graduated at Harvard College [illegible] loved as an instructor afterward, that, on his [illegible] students "put on tokens of mourning in the [illegible] He went to England in 1650, to the disappointment of one church, which had greatly desired his [illegible] years spent in England and Scotland, he was [illegible]

came senior fellow of Trinity College. Here, upon the king's restoration, he preached two sermons against the revival of the ceremonies of the English church, which were full of power and spirit, for which he was silenced.* He then returned to England, and preached with great reputation, until the act of conformity, in 1662, under which he was one of the two thousand sufferers. He then returned to his church in Dublin, and preached to them without molestation, in a private house, the remainder of his life. He died October 29, 1671, aged 65, greatly respected, and of extensive reputation as a preacher. During his last residence in Dublin, he had a pressing invitation from one of the churches in this town, according to Dr. Calamy, to become their minister.

(3) p. 156. There is little known of Mr. Mayo, excepting what is contained in the records of the church, in the handwriting of Increase Mather. I copy it here, because it has often been said, that nothing is known of him, except that he was minister of the Second Church; and the records have been so carelessly examined, that in the "Collections of the Historical Society," (iii. 258,) it is asserted, that "neither the time of his ordination, nor decease, is to be found in the records of the church."

"In the beginning of which year, [1672,] Mr. Mayo, the pastor, likewise grew very infirm, inasmuch as the congregation was not able to hear, and be edified; wherefore the brethren (the pastor manifesting his concurrence) desired the teacher to take care for a supply of the congregation, that the worship of God may be upheld amongst us, which was, for the present, by him consented to, as Christ should enable him.

"On the 15th day of the 2d month, 1673, Mr. Mayo removed his person and goods also from Boston, to reside with his daughter in Barnstable, where, (and at Yarmouth,) since he hath lived a private life; as not being able (through the infirmities of old age) to attend the work of the minstry. The ——— day of 3d month, [May,] 1676, he departed this life at Yarmouth, and was there buried."

* These sermons I met with in the Boston Athenæum, and found in them passages in the finest style of that peculiar Puritan eloquence which is so happily imitated in Walter Scott's romances.

I will add, here, that, through the kindness of the Rev. E. Q. Sewall, who examined, at my request, the church and town records of Barnstable, I have learned that Mr. Mayo was one of the original settlers of that town, but from what place he came, does not appear. The Hon. John Davis has also favored me with the sight of a passage, in the records of the Plymouth church, which informs us that Mr. Mayo was teacher in the church at Barnstable, while the Rev. John Lothrop was pastor there, and was thence removed to Eastham, [Nauset,] upon the gathering of a church in that place, and was afterward settled in Boston. The Rev. Mr. Shaw, of Eastham, informs me that he cannot find that such a person ever was minister in that place; that, previous to his own settlement, there had been but three ministers, Mr. Treat, Mr. Webb, and Mr. Cheever, with the exception of Mr. Osborn, who removed to another part of the town, now called Orleans. He thinks, therefore, that Mr. Mayo's residence must have been only occasional in the town. That nothing of Mr. Mayo's ministry appears on the church records of Eastham, does not, I think, argue any thing against his having been minister there; for he left no records at all of his ministry in Boston, and, if it were not for the testimony of other men, would not be known to have resided here.

(4) p. 157. This fire broke out at five o'clock in the morning, November 27. It burnt forty-five dwelling-houses, and several warehouses, besides the meeting-house. Its progress was stopped by a heavy rain. The following vote is all the notice contained in the records of this event. It would appear from the last clause, that it was customary, at that time, for some of the pews to be entered by a door through the side of the house.

"At a church meeting at our Deacon Philips his house, 3 of tenth month, 1676.

"Voted and agreed, that Mr. Richards, brother Collicot, brother Philips, brother Tyril, brother Hudson, be appointed as a committee, in order to the rebuilding of a meeting-house, for the comfortable attending the public worship of God, and that Mr. K———, Mr. W. Taylor, Mr. Middlecot, and Mr. Anthony Checkley, be desired to join with the committee, in order to the transacting this affair. It was also agreed, that, in case any that built pews in the meeting-house should see cause afterwards to leave them, the pews should

be disposed of, not by them, but as the church should see cause. And that *no pews should be made with a door into the street.*"

(5) p. 157. This was in 1682. Whether there were no gallery before, or whether this were an additional gallery, is not absolutely certain. The records of the church only say, "It was agreed that a gallery should be built for the boys to sit in, and that the place where they at present sit should be improved for pews." The probability is, that this was the gallery, which, as I have been told, ran along behind the pulpit.

(6) p. 158. The first was Richard Mather, born in 1596, who, having suffered for nonconformity, came to New England, in 1635, and was ordained pastor of the church in Dorchester, August 23, 1636. He was "a distinguished ornament of the churches," very useful in the several synods of that century, an able writer in their defence, and a solid, judicious preacher. Mr. Higginson, of Salem, speaking of his reply to Mr. Davenport, said, that "he was a pattern to all the answerers in the world." He died April 22, 1669, while moderator of a council in Boston, — which occasioned the following epitaph: *Vixerat in synodis, moritur moderator in illis.* He left four sons: Samuel, the first, was mentioned in a former note. The second, Nathaniel, born in England, March 20, 1630, and graduated at Harvard College, 1647. He was minister, for some years, in England, and being ejected among the two thousand, in 1662, went to Holland, and settled at Rotterdam; succeeded his oldest brother, at Dublin, in 1671; afterward took charge of a church in London; and died July, 1697, aged 67. "There is upon his tombstone a long Latin inscription by Dr. Watts, which ascribes to him a high character for genius, learning, piety, and ministerial fidelity." The third son, Eleazar, was born May 13, 1637, and graduated at Harvard College, in 1656; was ordained first minister at Northampton, in 1661; and died July 24, 1669, aged 32. He appears not to have been inferior to either of his brothers. The fourth son was Increase, born June 21, 1639, graduated 1656.

(7) p. 158. Increase Mather began to preach the year after leaving college, and, upon invitation from his brother, in Dublin, sailed for England, July 3, 1657. He proceeded master of arts, in Trinity

College, Dublin, the next year, "performing the usual exercise with great applause," * and was chosen fellow; but not being able to remain on account of ill health, went to England, and for some time preached at Torrington; then went to the island of Guernsey, as preacher, on invitation of the governor; from thence, at the solicitation of his friends, removed to Gloucester, and again, after some time, returned to Guernsey, where he was at the time of the restoration. It was then required that he should conform to the established church, or give up his living, and he accordingly returned to England. Here "he was offered a living of several hundreds a year, if he would forsake his principles; but he chose rather to trust God's providence than violate the tranquillity of his own mind;" * and therefore he returned to New England, after an absence of four years. In a memorandum now before me, written with his own hand, he says, "Providence so ordered, that, the bishops and ceremonies prevailing in England, I was constrained (that so I might keep my conscience pure) to leave that land; and being strangely disappointed and released, as to an engagement I was under to go for Holland, I was returned to New England in September, 1661." He was, the next week after his arrival, invited to preach at the North Church, and continued preaching until ordained, May 27, 1664. His father gave him the charge.

I have said, in the sermon, that his settlement was conditional. The conditions were, "If hereafter the Lord should call me to greater service elsewhere, or in case of personal persecutions, wherein not they, but I, shall be aimed at, or of want of health, or if I should find that a competent maintenance for me and mine should not be offered, — then (my relation to them notwithstanding) I would be at liberty to return to England, or to remove elsewhere." From the account of his son in the *Remarkables*, it seems that he was far from having a comfortable maintenance during many years, and was even distressed with poverty.

(8) p. 159. This is according to the representation of Hutchinson and others. The following minutes in the church records would seem to give a little different complexion to the affair: —

"October 30, 1687. After the sermon and service of the afternoon ended, I desired the brethren of the church to stay in the

* Nonconformist's Memorial, ii. 245, 246.

meeting-house, and proposed to them, that their officers might, in their name, draw up an address of thanks to the king for his declaration, wherein he does promise us the free exercise of our religion, and that he will maintain us in the enjoyment of our rights and possessions. I told the brethren I would take their silence for consent. All were silent. Nemine contradicente.

"December 11, 1687. I desired the brethren to stay, and acquainted them that it was thought needful that some one should be sent with an address of thanks to the king, for his gracious declaration; and that it had been proposed to me that I should go on the service. I told them, if they said to me, go, I would cast myself on the providence of God, and go in his name; but if they said to me, stay, I would not stir.

"Major Richards and ——— Way declared their willingness and free consent that I should go. I said to the brethren, if any of them were otherwise minded, I desired they would express themselves. Also, I would take their silence for consent. They were, then, all silent, and so did unanimously consent."

The account in the *Remarkables* agrees with this: "The superior gentlemen thought that a well-qualified person, going over with the addresses of the churches to the king, might obtain some relief to the growing distresses of the country." The voting of addresses was strenuously opposed by many, who thought they discovered Popery at the bottom. Hutchinson quotes a letter from President Danforth to Mather, dated November 8 of this year, in which he expresses his apprehensions very strongly.

(9) p. 160. He was twice chosen president of the college; first in 1681, when he declined the office, because his church refused to part with him; and again in 1684, when he accepted it on the condition of still retaining his relation to his church. He relinquished the place in September, 1701, on account of an act of the General Court, requiring the president to live at Cambridge. In the *Remarkables* of his life, it is intimated that this vote was aimed against him, personally, and was a measure which his enemies carried for the very purpose of removing him. Dr. Eliot, in his Biographical Dictionary, attributes his resignation to the pressure of age and infirmities. I find only the following vote of his church on this subject: —

"The brethren of the church, being assembled, at the desire of the governor and the General Assembly, and messengers from both houses in the General Assembly coming to them with a motion that they would consent unto the removal of their teacher's residence to the college in Cambridge, — the ensuing vote was passed: Being under the sense of the great benefit we have long enjoyed, by the labor of our reverend pastor, Mr. Increase Mather, among us, it must needs be unreasonable and impossible for us to consent that his relation to us, and our enjoyment of him and them, should cease.

"Nevertheless, the respect we have to the desire and welfare of the public does compel us to consent that our good pastor may so remove his personal residence to the college at Cambridge, as may be consistent with the continuance of his relation to us, and his visits of us with his public administrations, as often as his health and strength may allow it."

(10) p. 161. The expressions quoted in this place are from his Election Sermon, 1677. Sentiments and passages of a similar character may be found in his two sermons on the Comets, 1680 and 1682, in his volume of sermons on Providence, 1688, and in his series of discourses on the Beatitudes, 1717.

When I made this reference, I intended to quote here a few remarkable passages of some length; but my Notes are swelling to such a size, that I am forced to omit them.

(11) p. 162. It was not till after the sermons were in the press, that I was able to procure the *Remarkables*, or I should have modified the statement in this paragraph. In the thirteenth article of that book, we have an account of his change of sentiments on the subject of toleration; by which it appears that the expressions I have quoted represent him only as he was in the earlier part of his life. This article is by far the best and most eloquently written passage which I have met with in all Cotton Mather's works. Probably much of the illustration, and even the language, is taken from his father.

(12) p. 163. The treatise here referred to was published in 1683, and gives "an historical account of all the comets which have appeared from the beginning of the world," together with "the

remarkable events which have followed them," and, as he supposed, were predicted by them. It is a work of considerable labor, showing an extensive acquaintance with history, and written in a very good style. The credulity of the age peeps out in some curious stories, which I intended to copy when I referred to this place, but am compelled to omit for want of room.

(13) p. 169. "1697, 4d. 6m. [August.] This day the church voted a letter of admonition to the church in Charlestown, for betraying the liberties of the churches in their late putting into the hands of the whole inhabitants the choice of a minister."

I have noticed this vote particularly, because it is sometimes attempted to make us believe that the choice of ministers by the people, instead of the church, is a modern innovation, opposed to the uniform usage in times past. Here is an example to the contrary, of as long ago as one hundred and twenty-four years; and the example and opinion of the church in Charlestown are as valuable in settling the question of *usage*, as those of any other church. It satisfies us that usage is not invariable, and that the principle, so far from being settled, was actually contested from the first. Accordingly, Cotton Mather acknowledges, "Many people would not allow the church any privilege to go before them in the choice of a pastor." — *Ratio Disciplinæ*, p. 16. — And from the following passage, (*Rat. Disc.* p. 17,) it is evident that the congregation had not only, in some instances, claimed and exercised the right against the church, but that the church had often found it necessary, in order to preserve the appearance of a control, which they felt they could not exercise, to resort to so numerous a nomination, as to leave none for the people to choose whom *they* had not chosen. "The churches do sometimes, by their vote, make a nomination of three or four candidates, for whom the majority of the brethren have so voted, that whomsoever of these the choice falls upon, it may still *be said*, the church has chosen him." So that, even at that time, the principle was so far acknowledged unsound, as to be satisfied with a mere form and show.

(14) p. 171. Cotton Mather was invited to assist his father in preaching once a fortnight, September 27, 1680, (having been graduated two years.) The following February, he was requested to

do it "once every Lord's day." In December, 1682, the church expressed their great satisfaction, and desired that his labors might still be continued, with a view to his settlement. In January, 1683, they gave him a unanimous call, and another impatient one in August, 1684. There is an error in the sermon respecting the date of the ordination. It was in 1685, as will be seen by the following extract from the church records: —

"2d month, [April,] 5th day, 1685. The brethren staid in the meeting-house, and unanimously consented that the 13th day of May should be the day for my son Cotton's ordination as their pastor; and that letters should be sent to the two churches in Boston, to Charlestown, Cambridge, Roxbury, Dorchester, to desire them to send their messengers *to give us the right hand of fellowship;* that Mr. Allen and Mr. Willard should be desired to join with myself in imposing hands."

(15) p. 173. The ministry of the two Mathers continued during sixty-four years, besides nearly three years that passed before the ordination of Increase. The record of church members during this period is very careful and complete, there being no less than three separate catalogues. The whole number is eleven hundred and four. The record of baptisms is complete only after the year 1689, from which time to 1728, (thirty-nine years,) the whole number recorded is three thousand three hundred and eighty-four.

The first instance of any one being received to baptism by the half-way covenant, as it is called, appears to have been January 15, 1693, when I find the following minute: "Received into covenant Mary Sunderland; and her son John baptized. They being the first so admitted, in pursuance of the church's addresses unto me for that purpose and practice." The half-way covenant has been laid aside since April, 1786.

Collections for charitable and religious purposes were frequent during this period, and I have been surprised at the amount of them. £62 for redeeming captives from the Indians; £53 for redeeming two persons from Turkish captivity; £80 for relieving three young men from the same; £44 for the relief of the poor inhabitants of frontier towns in the east; £53 at fast for the poor; and £60 the same year, at thanksgiving, for propagation of the gospel; and in 1726, a large contribution was distributed, partly for the support of

the ministry in destitute places, and partly for the distribution of Bibles and other pious books. The church had an "*Evangelical Treasury*," for the purpose of promoting religious objects, and distributing Bibles, from which considerable sums were frequently appropriated. This was not very different from a Bible society.

It may gratify some to see, in this connection, a copy of a memorandum, which I found amongst Deacon Tudor's papers, of the collections in the different churches "for the sufferers in the great fire, March 20, 1760, on and round Oliver's Dock, part of King Street, &c." It may serve as another link between the charity of Boston, at the present day, and the year 1698, when C. Mather said, in a sermon, "For *charity*, — I may, indeed, speak it without flattery, — this town has not many equals on the face of the earth."

Brattle Street, £3407; Old South, 1860; King's Chapel, 960; West Church, 992; First Church, 1050; New Brick, 445; Old North, 418; New North, 1467; Mr. Mather's, 140; Federal Street, 209; Mr. Cundy's, 188; Mr. Bound's, 145.

(16) p. 173. The pamphlet published by the Convention was entitled "The Testimony of the Pastors of the Churches in the Province of the Massachusetts Bay, in New England, at their annual Convention in Boston, May 25, 1743, against several Errors in Doctrine, and Disorders in Practice, which have of late obtained in various Parts of the Land, &c." Mr. Gee published "A Letter to the Rev. Nathaniel Eells, Moderator of the late Convention, &c., containing some Remarks on their printed Testimony." In this he complains that the *title* of the pamphlet was calculated to mislead; that the pamphlet itself was adapted to give false impressions abroad and at home of the state of the churches; that, owing to the thinness of the Convention, the real opinion of the ministers of the province was not represented; and that no testimony was suffered to be brought forward in favor of the revivals in the land; and, in order to attain these objects, he publishes the design of another meeting of ministers, to be held the day after Commencement, [July 7.] The result of this meeting was "The Testimony and Advice of an Assembly of Pastors of Churches in New England, &c.," which, at the same time that it spoke favorably of the great religious work, acknowledged that it was accompanied with evils and dangers, and warned against them. It was signed by fifty-three

ministers, and by fifteen others, who added a stronger protest against itinerancy, and the intruding into parishes without consent of their ministers. Besides these, separate testimonies to about the same purport, from absent ministers, were added in an appendix, and increased the whole number of names to one hundred and eleven.

Gee's attack upon the Convention was answered very satisfactorily by Mr. Prescott of Salem, and Mr. Hancock of Braintree, who make it evident that he wrote in great hastiness of temper, and under the influence of what he regarded a personal affront. They prove several of his statements to be incorrect, and completely defend the doings of the Convention. Dr. Chauncy, who had been personally assailed by Mr. Gee, defended himself in a letter published in the Boston Evening Post, of June 24th, and Mr. Gee, according to Mr. Hancock, retracted.

Another meeting of the "Assembly" was held in September, 1745, when a further defence was attempted of the religious excitements of the country. This second "Testimony" was signed by Prince, Webb, and Gee, of Boston, and twenty-one others.

There were also published, in this feverish season, two "Testimonies" of laymen against the prevalent evils of the churches.

(17) p. 174. Mr. Gee's parents were members of this church, to which they were admitted by dismission from the old church, May 2, 1697. He was himself admitted to the church, May 13, 1716; was graduated at Harvard College, 1717; called by the church, October 22, 1723; ordained December 18. [He had been a candidate at the New Brick, with Mr. Waldron, in 1721, and had a call to settle in Portsmouth in 1723.] The council consisted of "the six churches of the united brethren, in this town, and the church in Roxbury." C. Mather gave the charge. On the 19th day of the next February, I find the following record of C. Mather: "The first baptism administered by Mr. Gee; and, indeed, the first that has been administered by any hands but those of *Mather*, (father and son,) in the Old North Church, for more than half a hundred years together."

It would seem, from the records of the church, that Mr. Gee was a great promoter of prayer meetings for the revival of religion, which were frequently held during his ministry. The church is also indebted to him for the establishment of a library, for the use

of its pastors, to which he made large donations of valuable books. The church originally exercised a constant superintendence over its concerns by a committee, and provided, occasionally, for its increase. For a long time, however, this has been neglected, and many of the books have been lost. There are now about a hundred volumes, principally old folios, and many of them very valuable.

It was during the ministry of Mr. Gee, in 1733, that the celebrated difficulties in the first church in Salem occurred, which occasioned its exclusion, for some time, from the communion of many of the churches of the state. The Old North Church, as appears from the records, which are full and minute upon this subject, took an active and leading part in this work of inquiry and discipline. After writing to and visiting the church and minister in Salem, it summoned an ecclesiastical council to proceed in the business, and "join with us in taking the second step of the third way of communion, wherein we have been visiting the first church of Christ in Salem." The minister and church refused to be disciplined, and were, in consequence, shut out from Christian fellowship for many years. It is not until October, 1745, that I find a letter of penitent acknowledgment, entreating to be restored to communion, was received and acted upon by the Old North Church, who took off the sentence of non-communion, with the express exception of the late minister.

(18) p. 174. Mr. Mather was chosen January 28, 1732, by sixty-nine votes out of one hundred and twelve. The council at his ordination was composed of the churches of Boston, Roxbury, Charlestown, and Cambridge. Dr. Colman gave the charge.

The number of the church that withdrew with him were thirty men and sixty-three women; the number that remained were eighty men and one hundred and eighty-three women. The date of their dismission is December 21, 1741. The house which they built [at the corner of North Bennet Street] is now occupied by a society of Universalists.

(19) p. 175. Mr. Checkley was ordained September 3, 1747. The churches invited to the council were, the First Church, the New South, the Old South, Brattle Street, New North, New Brick, and the church in Charlestown. The church in Hollis Street was

afterward added. Mr. Gee being at this time confined by sickness, the father of the candidate was requested to give the charge.

The conjunction of church and society in the management of their temporal concerns first took place in May, 1760; at which time, it was agreed, that the committee, chosen annually on the first Tuesday of May, should consist of the deacons, together with five members of the church, and four of the congregation.

(20) p. 175. The preliminary steps to the choice of Dr. Lathrop were taken by the church and society March 10, 1768. It was intended to ordain him as colleague to Mr. Checkley, who had been for a long time dangerously ill, and died on the 19th day of the same month. The election was made by a unanimous vote, both of church and congregation; the number of the former being twenty-five, and of the latter sixty-seven. The ordination took place May 18, 1768. The council was composed of the churches of Norwich and Lebanon, Connecticut; the Old South, the New Brick, the New North, and the churches in Hollis Street and Brattle Street. Dr. Sewall was moderator. Dr. Eliot introduced the service with prayer; the pastor elect preached from Philip. i. 17, — *Knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel;* Dr. Pemberton prayed and gave the charge; Dr. Sewall then prayed; and Mr. Byles gave the right hand of fellowship.

The practice of reading the lines of the psalms separately was abolished May 26, 1771.

In January, 1773, a monthly church meeting was established for encouragement and assistance in matters of religion.

April 16, 1786. After several meetings, the church renewed their covenant engagements, with a new "declaration of faith, and form of confederacy." At the same time, a system of discipline and order in regard to baptism and the Lord's supper was drawn up and established. The chief design of this was, to remove the obstacles which prevented the access of Christians to the table, to abolish the half-way covenant, and provide for the baptism of the children of every baptized parent, receiving no public confession of faith, except from those who design to keep *all* the ordinances of the Lord. Upon this system the church has ever since acted.

NOTES TO SERMON XIII.

(1) p. 178. I BELIEVE that I have fairly stated the controversy at this time, which has not, even yet, lost all its interest. Some small circumstances I have gathered from tradition, but principally from the pamphlets published on this occasion, which I found in the Boston Athenæum, — to which copious repository of choice and rare publications relating to the history of this country I am under many obligations. The first is, "An Account of the Reasons why a considerable Number, (about fifty, whereof ten are Members in full Communion,) belonging to the New North Church, in Boston, could not consent to Mr. Peter Thacher's Ordination." It has this motto: "Ministers shall not be vagrants, nor intrude themselves of their own authority into any place which best pleaseth them." It is a pamphlet of sixty pages, being a collection of documents interwoven with an angry history of the whole matter. In reply, there is "A Vindication of the New North Church from several Falsehoods spread in a Pamphlet lately published, &c.; by several Members of that Church;" to which are added two postcripts, by Mr. Webb and Mr. Thacher. Then was advertised, but I do not know whether it was published, "An Answer to a scandalous and lying Pamphlet, intituled A Vindication, &c." The New North people wrote with most moderation, though they were clearly in the wrong; while the advocates of the New Brick, though on the right side, lost all command of their temper, and wrote with great heat and passion.

There was also published "A brief Declaration of Mr. P. Thacher and Mr. J. Webb, in Behalf of themselves and their Church." This was in reply to a pamphlet of Increase Mather, entitled "A Testimony to the good Order of the Churches;" blaming the proceedings of the New North as anti-Congregational, and threatening them with ecclesiastical discipline and censure. Webb and Thach-

er declared their intention to conduct regularly, according to Congregational discipline, and defended their doings as such.

The two Mathers sent a letter to the dissatisfied party the day preceding the ordination, earnestly entreating them to be quiet, and do nothing disorderly. It appears to have had no effect.

"July 19, 1722. It was agreed upon, and voted, that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper should be administered in the revolution of every fourth Sabbath, from August 12, 1722."

(2) p. 178. The names of those gathered into a church state, at this time, were, Alexander Sears, Solomon Townsend, William Lee, Nathaniel Loring, Moses Pierse, Daniel Pecker, Josiah Baker, Henry Wheeler, John Waldo, James Tilestone. S. Townsend and W. Lee were chosen the first deacons.

The original covenant is not a profession of faith, except so far as a belief in the Christian religion, and in the doctrine of the Trinity, is asserted; but is rather an engagement to walk strictly in the commandments and ordinances of the gospel. It being the custom of many churches, at that time, to require a relation of the religious experiences of those who offered themselves for admission, a vote was passed, (August 9, 1722,) "that we would receive them with, and encourage their making of relations according to the usage of many of our New England churches; but will not impose them on such as we shall find averse to them. But, upon having our charity satisfied any other way, we will look upon them meet for our fellowship, and admit them to it."

The persons who commenced the building were in number twenty-four, whose names are recorded in the proprietors' books. The number increased to forty before the work was completed. The building committee (chosen December 12, 1720) consisted of John Frisel, Thomas Lee, Jonathan Montfort, Alexander Sears, James Tileston, James Pecker, and Edward Pell. This last-named gentleman drew the plan of the house. The choice of pews was made May 8, 1721, the first choice being given to John Frisel and William Clark, "for their good-will and great benefactions to said work;" then to the building committee; and then to the other proprietors, in an order determined by lot.

At the dedication, Dr. Increase Mather was first desired to preach but excused himself on account of his great age. He commenced

the morning service with prayer, which was closed with prayer by Mr. Cooper. The afternoon service commenced with prayer by Dr. Colman, and was closed by Mr. Prince.

A timepiece was presented to the church, by Mr. Barret Dyre, in June of this year. It kept its place in the meeting-house until 1820, when it was removed, and its place supplied with a new one, at the expense of Samuel Parkman, Esq.

There was no cellar under the house until the year 1762. It was completed at the cost of a thousand pounds, and, after some difficulties, paid for by subscription.

In front of the pulpit were originally two pews, the one for the elders' seat, the other for the deacons' seat. They were thrown into one in 1766, "as has been lately done at the Old North, and at Mr. Cooper's," (Brattle Street.)

A second gallery was originally built only at the west end, and never, I believe, on either of the other sides. This was closed up and converted into a hall for a singing-school, and other purposes, in 1808. A vote passed in January, 1751, "to build an upper gallery for the women at the *east* end of the meeting-house, if the money can be raised by subscription." This, however, was not accomplished. There was no access to the gallery, originally, except by stairs within the meeting-house, of which there were three flights; at the north-west, south-west, and south-east corners. The stairs in the north-west corner were removed in ——. The south porch was so altered as to contain stairs for the accommodation of the singers in 1801. In 1821, it was taken down, rebuilt of a larger size, so as to contain stairs of an easy access, and those which remained in the south-east and south-west corners were removed. At the same time, all the remaining square pews were taken down, and long pews erected in their room.

The first bell was hung in 1743, and the same year the meeting-house was for the first time painted. This bell was removed and sold in 1780, and the bell of the Old North, which was larger, was hung in its place. It was injured in 1792, and forbidden to be rung, except in case of fire, till it was recast in the same year, and was the first bell from the foundry of the late Paul Revere, Esq., which appears by the following inscription upon it: "The first church bell cast in Boston, 1792, by P. Revere"

(3) p. 178. Mr. Waldron was chosen minister September 26, 1721, by a vote of the proprietors, fifty out of sixty-three. The other votes were for Mr. Gee. At his ordination, Mr. Sewall commenced with prayer; Dr. Cotton Mather preached from 1 John iv. 7; Dr. Increase Mather gave the charge; Mr. Wadsworth the right hand of fellowship; and Mr. Waldron closed with prayer.

"August 23, 1725. Voted, that Mr. Waldron be supplied with constant help for six months ensuing from this day." A vote of this nature was frequently passed in both churches, while there was but one minister; it being thought that the strength of one was inadequate to the whole duty.

Mr. Waldron died September 11, 1727.

(4) p. 180. January 16, 1727. Mr. Welsteed was chosen by a vote of fifty-four out of sixty-four. At his ordination, Mr. Sewall and Mr. Cooper prayed; Dr. Colman gave the charge; and Mr. Walter the right hand of fellowship. "One of the first acts of the church after this ordination was, to reconsider and renew the vote about relations, passed August 9, 1722. A truly Christian act."

The reading of the Scriptures, as part of the public service, commenced in 1729, as appears by a vote of April 14, — "That the Bible Captain Henry Deering has made an offer of to the church, in order for Mr. Welsteed's reading and expounding, be accepted."

December 22, 1736. Mr. William Hooper received a unanimous call to settle as colleague with Mr. Welsteed. He, however, on the 3d day of the next month, received a unanimous call from the West Church, on that day gathered, over which he was ordained, May 18, 1737. He afterward received Episcopal ordination, and was rector of Trinity Church.

In January, 1731, fifty pounds were collected at a contribution for the relief of the inhabitants of Marblehead, distressed by the small-pox.

Mr. Gray was elected by a unanimous vote, April 3, 1738. The council at the ordination consisted of "the united churches in Boston, the churches of Rumny Marsh, (Chelsea,) Roxbury, Cambridge, and Charlestown." The pastor elect preached from Isaiah vi. 5—8; Mr. Welsteed and Mr. Webb prayed; Dr. Colman gave the charge; and Dr. Sewall the right hand of fellowship. The part

taken by Mr. Webb is the earliest notice we have of a reconciliation with the New North Church.

"August 22, 1739. Unanimously voted, to desire Mr. James Halsy to take his proper place in the elder's seat.

"Voted, to leave the affair of making a stairway in the westernmost porch with the committee." This was never done.

(5) p. 183. Dr. Pemberton was chosen, December 31, 1753, by a vote of fifty-four out of fifty-six, two persons not voting. The vote of the church was unanimous. He had resigned his charge at New York, by advice of the synod, on the 18th of November, and was at that time in correspondence with this church, who had expressed their strong desire to receive him as their minister. Part of this correspondence appears on the pages of the proprietors' records; as also a copy of the doings of the synod, by which he was dismissed with honor, and recommended as "a regular minister, of an exemplary, pious conversation; who has, to an uncommon degree, maintained the dignity of the ministerial character; eminently endowed with ministerial abilities, whose labors have been acceptable and highly esteemed throughout these churches."

The council at the installation, March 6, 1754, consisted of the First, the Old South, and the New North churches. By whom the several parts were performed I cannot learn. No entry is made upon the church book of records during Dr. Pemberton's ministry, except the names of a few baptized and admitted to communion. The catalogue of church members, from the beginning, is exceedingly imperfect, so that no estimate at all can be made of the number.

It was during his ministry, [August, 1757,] that taxes were first laid for the support of the gospel in this society. Dependence had been previously had upon voluntary contributions collected every Sunday; but this mode had been found the occasion of so much confusion, embarrassment, and debt, that it was now abolished. For many years, the income was insufficient to pay Dr. Pemberton's salary, and he every year generously relinquished his claim to the deficiency.

"October 7, 1762. Voted, that the singers sound the base at the end of the lines whenever they think proper." I copy this vote simply because I do not know what it means.

In 1763, an attempt was made to settle a colleague with Dr. Pemberton, and Mr. Tennant was the man intended for the place. Circumstances, however, prevented the design from being accomplished.

In May, 1771, the First Baptist Church requested that the use of the New Brick meeting-house might be allowed them for worship, during the time that they should be building; and accordingly, from June 23 to December 8, the two congregations worshiped together, their ministers preaching alternately the half of each Sabbath. Dr. Stillman's first sermon was preached from Psalm cxxxiii. 1, and his last from 2 Corinthians xiii. 11. In this place, also, it may be mentioned, that in June, 1802, when the New North society were about rebuilding their meeting-house, an invitation was given them to attend worship with this church, and the two congregations united in the services of the Sabbath until the completion of the new meeting-house, in May, 1804.

(6) p. 183. The British troops, during the blockade of Boston, treated the churches with particular disrespect. The steeple of the West Church they destroyed, because they supposed it had been used as a signal-staff; the Old South they turned into a circus or riding-school; the Old North they took down for the sake of the fuel, of which its massy timber afforded abundance; "although there were then large quantities of coal and wood in the town. The house, which was built in 1677, was in very good repair, and might have stood many years longer, had not those sons of violence, with wicked hands, razed it to the foundation." — *Church Records.*

The two societies worshiped together from the 31st of March, 1776; but the plan of perpetual union was not proposed until May 6th, 1779. On that day, which was the day of the state fast, a vote was passed, "that the two said churches should be united as one body," and a committee was appointed, of three from each society, with the deacons, to take the necessary measures toward accomplishing the affair. The committee on the part of the Old North were, Samuel Austin, Colonel Proctor, and Joseph Kittel; of the New Brick, William Paine, Newman Greenough, and Thomas Hichborn. The deacons were three; John Tudor, —— Brown, and —— Greenough. The committee reported on the 27th of June, and the union took place without one dissenting voice, in the most am-

icable manner, and under the most auspicious circumstances. The whole proceedings are recorded by Deacon Tudor, with great minuteness.

In January, 1780, Dr. Lathrop's salary was raised from one hundred to two hundred dollars a week; in May to four hundred; in September to eight hundred. In December, £2000 were raised to purchase his winter's wood.

The large Bible, which was used in the Old North Church, was presented by the committee, in behalf of the society, to the Second Church in Newton, at the time of Mr. Greenough's settlement there, in 1781.

In 1781, I find record of a baptism, by immersion, of a child about ten years old, at the particular request of the mother, "a bathing-tub being prepared for that purpose in the meeting-house."

(7) p. 185. On this occasion, the Rev. President Kirkland introduced the religious service with prayer; Dr. Ware preached from Phil. iv. 17: *I desire fruit that may abound to your account;* Rev. Mr. Fiske, of West Cambridge, made the ordaining prayer; Dr. Allyn, of Duxbury, gave the charge; Rev. Mr. Parkman presented the right hand of fellowship; Dr. Holmes, of Cambridge, made the concluding prayer.

I have said nothing in the sermon of the synods in which Increase Mather was engaged. At the time of his arrival from England, in 1662, the country was much excited and divided about the result of the synod which had set in the spring of that year, and which had published certain propositions relating to church membership. The fifth of these, which provided, that the children of all who have been baptized in infancy, and are not scandalous in life, and make public profession of faith, are entitled to baptism, — was the occasion of warm discussion. Mr. Mather, though but a young man, distinguished himself in the opposition to the synod, who appointed Mr. Mitchel, of Cambridge, so much praised by Baxter, to answer him. Mather was convinced by the arguments of Mitchel, and afterwards published in defence of the proposition he had opposed. The other writers in the controversy were Dr. Chauncy, president of the college, against the synod, who was answered by

Mr. Allin, of Dedham; and Mr. Davenport of New Haven, who was answered by Mr. Mather the elder, father of Increase.

He was also an important member of the synod of 1679, by which he was appointed one of the preachers, and moderator at its second session, in 1680. This was the *Reforming Synod*, called together to consider "What are the evils that have provoked the Lord to bring his judgments on New England? and what is to be done that so those evils may be reformed?" Mr. Emerson, in his History of the First Church, informs us, that this was occasioned by the long-continued controversy between the First and Old South Churches, and that the inquiry was, in fact, aimed against the Old South.

SERMON XIV.*

MEANS OF PROMOTING THE SPREAD AND GLORY OF THE GOSPEL.

2 THESSALONIANS III. 1.

BRETHREN, PRAY FOR US, THAT THE WORD OF THE LORD MAY HAVE FREE COURSE, AND BE GLORIFIED, EVEN AS IT IS AMONG YOU.

THE design for which the public institutions of our religion are maintained, and its teachers set apart, is so well expressed in these words, that they offer a suitable introduction to our remarks on the present occasion. They declare the object which we purpose to promote, in ordaining our brother to the work of the holy ministry. They describe the end for which he is to labor in the fulfilment of his ministry. They express that spirit of devout dependence upon God, which should occupy the hearts of those who are this day to receive a pastor. "Brethren," says the apostle, "pray for us," the ministers of Christ, "that the word of the Lord" — that word which we preach, which is God's truth, and the sanctification of man — "may have free

* Delivered at the ordination of the Rev. William Henry Furness, as pastor of the First Congregational Unitarian Church in Philadelphia, January 12, 1825.

course and be glorified" — may have a wide and unobstructed prevalence, and be an object of the admiration, affection, and faith of mankind.

This is the object of our prayers and labors. This is the object to which we devote our brother. It may not be unsuitable to the occasion to remark on *some of the means by which this object may be effected;* which I shall attempt to do under the two divisions suggested by the text.

I. 1. In the first place, the circulation of the Scriptures is a powerful means of effecting this object. They are, in one sense, the word of God, though not in the sense of our text, as the New Testament did not exist at the time of the apostle's writing this epistle. This volume is the repository of those facts and instructions on which the whole system of our religion rests. The more widely, then, it is known, and the more carefully it is studied, the more generally will religious truth prevail; and if any errors have been mingled with it in its passage down to the present age, the more readily will they be removed. One chief cause of error is want of knowledge. Men uphold false systems, because they are ignorant of the true. And the great book of truth cannot be familiarly in the hands of all, exercising its rightful influence over minds and hearts, and yet the dominion of error and falsehood stand. The evil at present is, that the Scriptures are neither sufficiently read, nor with sufficient freedom. The many still pay too great deference to their theological standards and religious superiors, and to the impressions of early years. They suppose that they know their religion already, and, therefore, either do not study the Bible at all, or they study it for some other purpose than that of learning. So that the light of truth is prevented from reaching their understandings and hearts, either by closing the volume which contains it, or by clos-

ing their eyes when the volume is opened. Whatever is done, then, toward promoting the frequent, studious, intelligent perusal of the sacred volume, is so much for the advancement and influence of the gospel; and as it was the bringing out of the Scriptures from their hidden places, which shook the power of the Papal throne, so it is the thorough removing of the veil from them, and introducing them freely and fearlessly to the understandings of men, which shall insure the dominion of the consistent and glorious gospel.

2. The prevalence of religion is to be ensured by the maintenance of public worship — a means the more particularly to be noticed, as it is the principal object for which Christian societies are organized. The influence of this is incalculable. No one can doubt, who reflects but for a moment, that more is owing to it than to all other causes; and that no mode of diffusing and perpetuating knowledge, and the influence of knowledge, has ever been devised, to be compared with the wisdom of this. Public worship among the heathen was quite a different thing; for it was not familiar, social, and personal, and, above all, it was not attended with regular instruction concerning truth and duty. It was rather the magnificent spectacle of a high festival, which gratified the senses with its opulence and pomp, but had no concern with the intellectual and moral nature. In the Christian system, it addresses itself to the hearts of men, to their interests, feelings, and wants. It exercises its power over individual character. It meets the people in all their little communities, renews, at short intervals, its lessons on the most important truths, and maintains an uninterrmitted oversight of their moral sentiments and habits. It is impossible that the effects should not be vast. This silent, steady, uniform operation must act upon the moral

world, like the quiet and equal warmth of the sun upon the vegetable creation. The action of one day may seem insignificant; but the constant and permanent action works wonders. Men are sometimes led, doubtingly, to complain, that no greater effects are witnessed. They should consider that this institution of our religion is a vast and extensive machine, operating on an immense scale. A single congregation is but one of the little wheels in the complicated arrangement, and may seem to move on without bringing much to pass. We must survey it in its connection with the whole. We must think of this action as exerted upon a whole people, and as going on from year to year, and from generation to generation. We must consider what society would be without it. Level with the ground your places of social worship. Let the voice of the preacher be hushed. Let the people be no more collected to hear of their duties to God and to one another. Let the seventh day be undistinguished — no respite from the vain pleasures and passionate bustle of worldly pursuits; no intermission of the eager chase of enjoyment and gain; but from year to year, generation after generation, let the whole community be given up to temporary interests, unreminded of God and eternity. It is easy to conjecture the religious ignorance and moral desolation that would ensue, and how rapidly the march would be taken backward to the melancholy condition of the heathen. What reflecting man is not aware that a large portion of the Christian community have no knowledge of their religion, except what they gain from the weekly services of God's house? They are excited to read the Scriptures only by the impulse which is given there. And therefore the institution of public worship is that which sustains among men, certainly the salutary influence, and probably the very existence, of Christianity itself. Without

this, indeed, it might be known to the studious and inquiring, just as the systems of Plato and the Stoics; but its blessings would not be diffused, nor its holy and rejoicing light be shed upon the dwellings and poured into the hearts of its now countless votaries.

There is a striking illustration of the truth of these remarks in the history of the Jewish people. That people, although the selected nation of God, acquainted familiarly with a law which had been revealed under circumstances the most imposing and impressive; every step of their existence marked with the most surprising displays of the divine presence and power; possessing a temple and a ritual which surpassed in magnificence the most splendid institutions of the heathen world; — yet were not restrained from constant proneness to other religions, and frequent relapses into idolatry. Observe the cause of this. The sacrifices could be offered but at one spot. Their place of public assembling was but at one city; to which, indeed, all the men were compelled to resort three times a year; but only three times, and they became not very scrupulous for more than one attendance, while the women and children were not bound to attend at all. It therefore happened that the inhabitants on the distant borders derived no satisfaction from the pompous ceremonials of their law, of which they were scarcely witnesses or partakers; they were far nearer to the altars of the Gentiles than to their own, better acquainted with their worship, and therefore easily drawn into it. After their long sufferings in the captivity at Babylon, they erected synagogues in all their villages, collected in them for reading and expounding the law every Sabbath day, and, being thus perpetually interested in their own religion, were no longer attracted by that of their neighbors.

It is evident, therefore, brethren, how much is due to the

institution of public worship. Whenever you assemble here with those who keep holy time, you are giving essential aid to the cause of divine truth and human happiness. There is said by philosophers to be such a connection between the distant spheres of the material system, that no impulse or motion can be felt by one without the participation of all; so that even the falling of a stone to the earth creates a concussion which is recognized and answered in the remotest star. There is a connection not unlike this between the different bodies that compose the Christian system on earth. The operation of each is necessary to that of the whole; the hinderance of one is the hinderance of all. When you bind yourselves by a vow to-day to labor with your pastor for the regular maintenance of the social institutions of our faith, you are doing what affects the church universal of our Lord, and is recognized in that distant world where the angels rejoice over every repenting sinner. And whenever, by neglect, or contempt, or absence, you think merely to testify your dislike of a poor preacher, or your love of an afternoon's repose, you in fact do all which you can do to destroy the influence of the gospel in the world, — which, if all should follow your example, would soon eradicate its very existence.

3. Intimately connected with public worship, so that, indeed, we can hardly separate it even in thought, is the next means which I shall mention of spreading the influence of religion, — namely, preaching. This is the great, divinely-appointed instrument of truth and salvation. It pleases God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them who believe. Without this, public worship, as may easily be observed, would lose its chief efficacy as a moral means, and the Bible would soon cease to be the most common and powerful of books.

We cannot but admire the wisdom which made this happy provision for the perpetuity of religious knowledge. Simple and efficacious as it is, the founder of Christianity appears to have been the first to discern in it that moral power which should move and control the world. Other religious teachers and reformers had instructed orally; but it was in schools and groves, a select number, and for a limited time. Jesus was the teacher of man. He addressed himself to the multitude. He adapted himself to every condition and character. He spoke as the reformer, the leader, the friend, of the human race; and his "gracious words" went forth throughout the whole mass of society, and changed the moral complexion of the world. His miracles, indeed, gave authority to his doctrine; but it was his doctrine which wrought the change. His supernatural powers converted men to the faith that he was from God; but it was his preaching which converted them from sin. And in that effect of his preaching, we perceive as distinctly the agency of God, as in his raising the dead to life. That his command should call Lazarus from the tomb, and that preaching should reform the religions of the civilized world, are equally striking demonstrations of the presence and power of God; for they are alike vast effects from apparently inadequate causes. A poor, uninstructed peasant, by laboring for three years, in the most despised corner of the most despised nation on earth, whose whole territory is but a speck on the map of the world, laid the foundation of a work which was to survive the changes of empire, and the ruins of the philosophies and religions of man; and this without seeming to make provision by any means adequate to such an effect. Other teachers have committed their wisdom to writing, lest, being intrusted to words, which are but breath, it should be dispersed and lost. But Jesus confided

in the divine energy of his doctrine, and, with an unconcern truly sublime, cast it abroad to make its own way and perpetuate its own existence — sufficient proof that he knew it to be from God. So it has proved. Human instructors and reformers have elaborately wrought out their systems; have sometimes clothed them in eloquence which seemed little less than inspiration, and promised perpetual continuance to their influence over man. Yet how small and short has that influence proved! How have their sects disappeared! and by how very few are their works even read, though still accounted among the perfect productions of the human mind! While Jesus, uninstructed in human philosophy, with no attainments in the elegant learning of the world, teaching but for three years, and putting not a syllable upon record, has yet made his instructions as familiar to the nations as their own native tongues — has bestowed on the humblest of his followers a wisdom superior to that of the Grecian masters themselves — nay, has affected the whole mass, both of sentiment and character, throughout the whole, as those great, and laborious, and long-lived men were able to affect only a few familiar friends within the privileged sphere of their own personal influence.

By what means was this done? It was through the institution of preaching. He sent forth his followers to do as he had done, — to spread and transmit his religion by personal intercourse with men — to talk with them of God and their souls as a man talks with his friend — to come near to their understandings and hearts by address in familiar speech, by thrilling tones of voice, by earnest gesture, by the appealing eye and the eloquent countenance — by that living and breathing instrument of communication which God has made as much more powerful than the dumb

register of written words as the creation of God is higher than the invention of man.

They thus went abroad, miracles attesting their commission, but with no learning or accomplishments beyond what their Master had given them, with the simple but sincere and pathetic history of his life and teaching; and the temples of false religion, the altars of pagan idolatry, the immoralities of heathen superstition, vanished before them, and the holy church rose upon their ruins. By the same means it has been perpetuated from age to age; and the efficiency of this instrument has perhaps in no way been more distinctly manifested, than in the fact, that the religion itself has varied and changed with the character and fidelity of its teachers, has risen and declined with their rise and fall, and has from no cause suffered so much as from those who rose to power and exercised dominion, but would not impart instruction; became bishops and popes, but would not preach; — and has been recovered by those who have devoted themselves with zeal to the persevering preaching of the word. The press, indeed, aided and established the reformation; but it was the preachers of the reformation who animated and instructed the press; and if these living oracles should become dumb, even the omnipotence of the press would not be able to withstand the rapid and sad decline of religious knowledge, and its moral influence.

Observe, then, my brother, the dignity of your vocation. Consider to what a glorious company you are this day joined; what a mighty instrument it is given you to wield, and what an unspeakable honor is yours to be joined with Christ and his apostles in the sublime work of the spiritual emancipation of man. God give you strength to do as they did, and honor you with large success!

4. Another of the means to be named, in which the pastor and his people are to coöperate, is the observance of the ordinances of our faith. No system of religion can extensively prevail which is not aided by its hold on the inferior nature of man. The purely spiritual, addressed to a being not purely spiritual, will seldom find access except by external accompaniments, which are more needful to some minds, but in some measure are needful to all. And it is observable, respecting the ordinances of the gospel, that, besides the ordinary efficacy attributable to stated rites, they have the weight of an historical testimony to the truth of the religion itself: they are in the nature of monuments erected to the memory of its early facts, to which the very circumstance of their existence is incontrovertible evidence. They are perpetual vouchers for the truth of our religion; and by discontinuing them, you silence the venerable witnesses, which have existed from the day of our Lord, bearing testimony through all the ages. You hide from the world certain striking objects, peculiarly adapted to attract regard, to fix the inquiring attention, and prevent Christianity from being lost to the notice of man.

But beyond this general importance is to be considered their value to the faith and comfort of believers. They revive in their minds, and keep fresh, the sense of their connection with Christ, and their obligation to the truth. By simple, but affectionate and tender, appeals to their hearts, they increase their love, strengthen their faith, quicken their devotion, animate their obedience. They bring nearer to them a sense of that inestimable love which passes knowledge, and work in them a powerful admiration, and diligent imitation, of their holy and honored Lord. No sincere and grateful believer can sincerely and gratefully offer himself or his child at the baptismal

font, or sit down with brethren at the memorial of his Master's love, without acknowledging an increase, or at least a confirmation, of the power of religion. No such one can neglect it, after once tasting its satisfactions, without experiencing a decay of his interest in religion, and an unsatisfied thirst for the appropriate sustenance of his soul.

II. Having thus spoken, as far as the occasion demands, of the means by which we are to promote the free course of the gospel, we proceed to the other part of our text, and inquire how we may cause it to be *glorified*. This is not a distinction without a difference; since that may be upheld by powerful institutions, and extensively prevail, which yet is not an object of reasonable reverence and admiration. And the friends of Christianity have done but a part of their duty when they have labored for its diffusion, if they have not also secured for it the homage, respect, and love, which are its due.

That it rightfully challenges the submission and trust of man, as being in itself essentially and unspeakably glorious, is beyond controversy. Yet, in order to be discerned as such, it must be seen as it is, in its own beautiful features, and native, unmixed excellence. As it came from its Author, and was displayed in his life, none have ever been able to regard it with contempt or indifference. The eloquent tongue of infidelity itself, like that of the reluctant demons of old, has been compelled to utter its eulogy and bear witness to its heavenly name. But it might be veiled under such disguises, mingled with such crude and false philosophy, encumbered with such unnecessary appendages, and so implicated with the weakness and vices of its professed advocates, as to render it repulsive rather than glorious, and procure it enemies instead of friends.

They who are set for the defence of the gospel must

remember this, and be earnest to advance such a faithful representation of its doctrines, that even gainsayers shall acknowledge that "God is in them of a truth." In deciding what form of doctrine will most attract to our religion the admiration and faith of mankind, we are liable to deceive ourselves by partial views and limited considerations. We are apt to judge too exclusively by what exists before our own eyes, and in the present state of the world. But we should reflect, that the doctrine which is most honored now, may not be so permanently; that what now is thought to constitute the peculiar glory of revelation, may not be actually most glorious; while that which is the contempt of the majority, may not only, under other circumstances, become its admiration, but may be grand and eternal truth. History overflows with the proof of this position. There was a time when Christianity itself was every where spoken against, and its advocates numbered with the offscouring of the world. There was a period when the Romish church was the honor and pride of undivided Christendom, while the noble company of the reformers was trodden down in contempt. We are not, therefore, to judge of what shall be lastingly glorious by the present prevalence of any of its popular forms; but by its conformity with those attributes of the divine nature which are unchanging, those acknowledged laws of truth which never vary, and those principles of the human constitution which are in all ages the same. Every thing else changes with the change of circumstances and the fluctuating tide of manners and opinions. This tide has lifted on its surface, and borne on triumphantly before men, that system of doctrine which is now glorified as the uncorrupt and orthodox faith; but the waters may subside, as they often have done before, and bear it away, when they fall, to the deep gulf of neglect and oblivion;

while the simple and more rational system, which is now the object of abuse from those who lead, and of horror in those who follow, shall win to itself the faith and affection of the world, and rise in glory, as it has been thrust down in shame. For this we are to toil. Let no hosts of opposition discourage us. To advance this, it may be that we must bear obloquy, reproach, and suffering. But He who brought it to the world endured it all before; like this holy doctrine, was despised and rejected of men; and as he triumphed and reigned, so shall this doctrine also.

It is true that in whatever form Christian truth may prevail, it is not robbed of its lustre or power. It is one proof of its heavenly origin, that no corruptions have ever been able to hide its beauty and majesty, or palsy its energy. Its light has been seen and felt amid all the thick vapors and dark clouds that have been accumulated around it. But still, if all could be swept away, and the luminary shine from the firmament in its own free and unobscured splendor, how far more conspicuous would be its glory, and with what new and fervent admiration would it be welcomed!

We cannot doubt, then, that the simplest system of doctrines is most likely to advance the permanent glory of the gospel. Every thing is admirable and sublime in proportion to its simplicity. The objects which are grandest in the works of nature are among the simplest. Of the sublime works of God this is one of the striking characteristics. What more sublime than the starry heavens, the lofty mountains, the unfathomable ocean, whether sleeping or tempestuous? Yet no objects are more simple, or offer less complication of ideas. The grandest of the works of man are also the simplest. Those admirable structures, whose ruins are the wonder of posterity, and those writings

which are equally first in all ages, are for nothing so remarkable as for their noble simplicity. What is complicated and intricate becomes obscure and wearisome; and the only things whose beauty is ever new, and whose attraction never ceases, are those which are plain and simple.

So it is with the gospel. Compared with the complicated systems of the heathen world, and the multitudinous observances of the Mosaic dispensation, there is an obvious majesty in its simplicity, which speaks the perfected work of God. If you seek to render it imposing by a profusion of gorgeous observances, you may, indeed, seem to succeed for a time, and among some, as has happened in the disguises which it wore in the darker ages of the church; but you hide its divinest charm, and liken it to the theatrical display of heathen worship. If you annex to it mysterious and subtle dogmas, which perplex the understanding, and are fearful to the fancy, you may seem to excite veneration and awe; but still there was a profounder awe in the false mysteries of pagan superstition; and in the schools of the philosophers, there was as great ingenuity and subtilty of solemn dogmatism, when "the world by wisdom knew not God," as has ever existed in the schools of the fathers and doctors of metaphysical Christianity. It is not thus that the religion of Jesus is to be glorified. It is when unadorned that it is adorned the most; when stripped of all the dazzling and pompous accompaniments by which man would give lustre to the work of God, it stands forth, as Jesus walked in Judea, humble, unpretending, without title or state, yet with a native mien of dignity and power which impresses and overawes.

> "O, how unlike the complex works of man,
> Heaven's easy, artless, unencumbered plan!

No meretricious graces to beguile,
No clustering ornaments to clog the pile;
From ostentation as from weakness free,
It stands, like the cerulean arch we see,
Majestic in its own simplicity."

This simplicity of the gospel is seen in its *object* and in the *manner* in which it accomplishes that object.

Its object is the salvation of man, that is, his preparation for the happiness of heaven, by forming in him a holy heart and character, — an object simple and unambiguous, yet one of the grandest which can be conceived by the human mind.

That this is the single and final purpose of the Christian revelation, is written so plainly on its very front that it cannot be mistaken. This is what is meant when it proposes to "make all things new;" when it speaks of the universal regeneration of man and earth; and would "purify a peculiar people zealous of good works." Amidst all the differences of Christians respecting the doctrines and forms of their religion, it has never been matter of question that this is its end. Whatever influence the incautious interpretation and preaching of the word may often appear to have had in relaxing the obligation of virtue, and encouraging sin, — whatever opinions inconsistent with a pure heart and moral life may have been vehemently maintained, — yet it has never been deliberately denied, that a pure heart and holy life are the intended and essential results of the Christian system, without which it does not save.

For this reason, it is the more melancholy that any should be found in the Christian pulpit to speak in sneering and contemptuous tones of morality, and thus render it an object of suspicion and dislike to religious people. Doubtless there is an external superficial propriety, sometimes

dignified with the name of morality, built upon worldly expediency, independent of the great principles of right, and the authority of God, which, in the view of the Christian, is utterly hollow and insufficient. But this should be referred to the class of wrong principles and motives. Speak of it as such strongly as you please; but it is a fatal error, on account of this mistake, to cast suspicion upon the very name of morals; for you thus lead men lightly to esteem, easily deride, and practically trample upon, what is as indispensable a part of Christian holiness, as the Sermon on the Mount is of the New Testament, or the Ten Commandments of the Old; and what can be no more innocently slighted, than those holy passages may be expunged from the sacred volume.

As the *object* of the gospel is thus simple, so also, as I said, are its *means*.

These may be said to be divine truth. Truth is the great instrument by which, in this dispensation of God's grace, the human mind is wrought upon, subdued, guided, sanctified, saved. "Sanctify them by thy *truth*; thy *word* is truth." "Being born again by the *word of God*, which liveth and abideth forever."

This word, or truth, divides itself into two branches; doctrines or principles, and precepts; in other words, instruction concerning the principles of religion, and concerning their application in practice. In regard to each, great is the simplicity of the means by which the gospel effects its objects.

In regard to *doctrines*, their great purpose is the formation of the religious principle. Those which are necessary to this are few and intelligible. The religious principle, which frames the character of the religious man, and sanctifies him throughout by its influence, is that settled regard to the

divine authority, presence, and perfections, which induces a necessary conformity to his will. Now, what are the doctrines which are necessary to such a state of mind? That they cannot be very numerous or very difficult, is evident from this, — that the patriarchs, in the infancy of knowledge and religion, possessed it. The apostle speaks of it in them under the name of *faith*, and declares that it qualified them to "inherit the promises." Now, their faith, sufficient as it was, was a faith in no more articles than the existence, providence, and perfections of God, and a consequent trust in him and subjection to his will, under a sense of their accountableness.

It is evident, therefore, that the religious principle may exist upon the foundation of a few simple doctrines. It is equally evident that it does so exist beneath the Christian dispensation. Its great doctrines of God's authority and man's accountableness, together with the mission of Jesus as the promised Messiah and Savior of men, and a future state of righteous retribution, are those on which the religious principle is now builded, and by which man is sanctified and saved. Or, to express the same thing in the words of our Lord himself, *This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* There are doubtless other truths connected with these, and following from them. But these are the sufficient principles which lie at the foundation, and sustain, and lead to, the others. These are they which the Holy Scriptures alone enumerate, when they profess to assert what is essential to salvation. These, when they have made their abode in the mind, are able to control, to subdue, to correct, to elevate, to purify. They present the most grand and authoritative motives; they combine with themselves all that is affecting in the history and facts of our religion; and they pervade

the mind which heartily receives them with holy and pure devotion.

Such is the simplicity of the gospel in those doctrines through which it operates on men.

This representation, I am aware, does not acknowledge in the Christian system some of those features which are by many thought to belong to it, and to constitute its essential glory. It may seem to such less imposing; it certainly offers less gratification to that thirst for the mystical and mysterious, which some are so anxious to gratify, and which is so strong a propensity in the human constitution, that, if I believed in the original corruption of human nature, I might be inclined to number this among those depraved passions which are inimical to the truth. I certainly conceive it most consistent with the character of a *revealed* religion, that its revelations be clear and distinct, not wrapped up in obscurity and mysticism. They may not be within the grasp and full comprehension of the finite mind; but the mind must be able to know *what* they are; otherwise they are not revealed. Yet there has always been among men an unwise craving for what is mysterious, vague, inexplicable; for whatever oppresses and overwhelms the imagination, and is in some degree an object of terrific emotion. It is this which has in all ages created the insatiable curiosity to search the secrets of the grave; which has called forth the tales and terrors of supernatural apparitions, and the cruel and bloody superstitions which appertain to sorcery and magic. It is the same propensity which has led to the loading of all religions with fearful and dismaying appendages. A plain religion, which men can understand and explain, seems to them not sufficiently removed from human things, not sufficiently awful and distant, too well adapted to poor human understanding. They would have

shadows, clouds, and darkness rest upon it; they would believe and worship they know not what. When, therefore, Christianity came to them, plainly and frankly, to walk with them and converse with them as a familiar friend, they were both astonished and dissatisfied: they thought it ought not to be so simple as it appeared, and soon persuaded themselves that it was not; then they obscured it under the follies and fancies, mysteries and forms, notions and speculations, which they had brought with them from their heathen faith and heathen philosophy. History tells us how sadly the pure doctrine soon became disfigured by the incorporation of pagan rites and philosophical dogmas; more and more obscured as the age grew darker and darker, until, in the midnight of the barbaric ages, it could hardly be distinguished, amid its disguises, for the plain system of Christ. A single example of this may well illustrate this general position. In the early day of Christianity, a synopsis of the Christian doctrine was drawn up, which has come down to us under the name of the Apostles' Creed. This describes what was then thought to be the orthodox faith; and it represents the gospel so nearly according to its Master's simplicity, that at this day the heterodox Unitarian subscribes it as heartily as the orthodox Trinitarian, and with far more consistency. But at the council of Nice, so great progress had been made in adapting the gospel to the human love of the marvellous, that a new creed was fashioned, containing many very subtile and unintelligible distinctions. After a yet further lapse toward barbarism, a yet further adaptation was requisite; and then came forth the full maturity of the Athanasian Creed, containing not only the most wonderful mysteries which a degenerate age could express, but the most hearty curses a profligate age could utter. These three creeds may be fairly regarded as three monuments, by

which the ingress of the dark ages was marked. And in like manner they may serve to signify the progress of the light of the reformation. The Athanasian Creed is hardly named among Protestants, except with pity and horror. For even the members of that church which still commands it to be read thirteen times a year, pay it neither deference nor respect. The Nicene symbol is fast losing its authority and veneration. As knowledge and candor gain ground, the churches are more and more satisfied with the plain exposition of the Apostles' Creed; many have even gone back to the true creed of the apostles in the Holy Scriptures.

Would to God that the progress of the reformation had been more rapid and more thorough! But the same causes which rendered it necessary have contributed to retard it. We are not to expect, therefore, that the church will return at once to the simplicity that is in Christ. It is too plain and unpretending: yet, in truth, this is its glory; at present too little recognized, too much despised; yet a wonderful and unspeakable glory. There have been those who would not believe in the remedy which God has in late years provided for the most loathsome of diseases, because it is so simple; and just so, many will not believe that so simple a gospel can work the regeneration of the world, and therefore they would fill it with wonders. Let *us*, brethren, receive it as it is, as it lies in the Scriptures of truth. Let us not be anxious for other wonders; the greatest of all wonders is its simplicity. And nothing which the invention of man has added, or can add, could so demonstrate "the wisdom of God and the power of God."

Besides the doctrinal portion of our religion, there is, I observed, its preceptive portion, which also operates as a chief means towards effecting its great design. Under this division there is a simplicity equally remarkable, though it

is unnecessary to enter into so full an illustration. Nothing can be less complicated or obscure. The directions concerning duty are plain and comprehensive; not needlessly multiplied, and so referable to a few great principles, as to be liable to no doubt, forgetfulness, or mistake. Love to God and to men is their substance. Whatever is inconsistent with this is forbidden; whatever is conformable to this is duty. Love is the fulfilling of the law: he who cherishes the principle will never be guilty of a breach of the law. There is needed no extensive learning, no deep and laborious investigation, no profound and intricate ratiocination, to ascertain what the Lord requires of us; no volumes of refined casuistry, or metaphysical discussions, which should make it a "very learned, subtile, and ingenious thing to be a Christian." But the path is plain, and the directions unembarrassed; and the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein.

Such is the character in which the gospel must be presented, if we would secure its true and permanent glory. I pass to remark more briefly, in the next place, that, if we would cause it to be glorified, we must advocate it with zeal. The success of every cause, of whatever nature, is greatly dependent on the spirit of its friends. It is for them to present its claims, to urge them on the notice of men, to awaken attention to them, and to excite interest in others by evincing that it has had power to interest themselves. How many arduous and almost impossible enterprises have been achieved by the simple force of the ardor with which their conductors prosecuted them! How many excellent plans, of no very difficult accomplishment, have been suffered to fail merely for want of zeal and enterprise in their behalf! With this truth impressed upon us by all the experience of the past, we cannot look for the gospel to pre-

vail, in an opposing world, except it call forth the zealous co-operation of its friends. It never has been so, it never can be so. God has made the energy of man to work its prevalence in times past, and he has not changed the constitution of things. Throughout the history of the church, it has been the "fervent in spirit" who have commanded the attention and homage of men. Zeal, even when degenerated into fanaticism, and separated from the aids of reason, has gathered followers and gained power. And reason, except when allied with zeal and active perseverance, has been little able to maintain, much less to extend, her rightful dominion.

God forbid, then, that the greatest and most important of all causes should be treated by its friends lightly and coolly; and that, through any apprehension of being charged with "madness," they should avoid the earnest and burning "words of truth and soberness," and the ready self-devotion of those who "spend and are spent" to promote magnificent designs. A man without zeal lives to the condemnation either of his own heart, which is incapable of high moral fervor, or of his profession, which is unworthy of it. Zeal is doubtless a different thing in different men. In some men, it cannot be excited to that passion which it displays in others. But every man is susceptible of a moral energy of action, a devotion of spirit to some favorite object; and this is zeal — capable of cultivation and growth. Let it be cultivated and grow in the friends of religion, if they would advance their religion. It excites attention, sympathy, and coöperation. It is the spring of successful action. It is in character what eloquence is in language. It gives a man surprising power over the minds of others; it enables him to excite the hearts of the coolest, and engage the exertions of the most indolent. To act for a great cause coldly is as

disgraceful as to plead for it sluggishly; and to do either is to aid in defeating it. It were better to be fanatical than indifferent; for then it might at least be seen that our religion has power to move and agitate. But where reason presides over the religious affections, the last thing to be apprehended is fanaticism; and success is not to be hoped or expected, except men be addressed with fervor and earnestness, and their moral feelings be engaged by the beauty, grandeur, and excellence of what is in itself so holy and sublime, and so fitted to insure the perfection of the human character.

At the same time, if we would cause the truth to be glorified, it must be advocated with charity. There must be no bitterness, nor clamor, nor wrath, nor malice, nor evil speaking, in the Christian's zeal. All these are contrary to his Master's spirit, and hinder his cause. The spirit of intolerance and bigotry has been one of the principal obstacles to the progress of the church and the improvement of man. It has led to the assumption of authority which Christ never delegated, to the uttering of anathemas which his word does not warrant, to the imposition of creeds which bind the truth in fetters, and deprive the soul of its lawful light and liberty. Let all this be discouraged, here and elsewhere. Wherever Christ's proclamation of liberty has been heard, let not the pretensions of human bigotry be tolerated. It has shed the best blood of the church, and impiously striven to blot out the names of good men from the Lamb's book of life. In this blessed land its dungeons have been destroyed, and its fagots extinguished, and it has been cast down from the throne of power, where it wielded the magistrate's sword. But it still lodges in many an unhappy bosom, and blasts, with the venomous breath of its mouth, reputation, influence, and peace. As we honor

the name of our Lord, let us wage against this foe a war of extermination. Let us not rest, nor hold our peace, till its power be utterly trodden under foot. Watch against it, pray against it, preach against it. Let not a word nor a thought plead for it in this holy place. No, my brother, though your people, with the madness of Israel when he asked a king, should clamor for a creed that might exclude their own faith from improvement, and other believers from their fellowship, or should press you to fulminate from this place the denunciations of reviling and ill-will which have sounded from other pulpits, resist them to the utmost, and pay any price rather than so far forget the spirit and example of your Lord. And if you, brethren, should ever find in your pastor this sad breach of holy charity, fail not to remind him that he is unfaithful to his trust, and enter your loud protest against this dishonor to a good cause, this desecration of a holy office. True religion will triumph only as it is free. You set limits to its empire whenever you abridge the right of free inquiry, or allow any man to place himself on the judgment-seat of Christ, or nourish in your own bosoms a censorious temper and a spiritual ambition.

But, above all, in the last place, there is nothing which will so tend to promote the honor of the true gospel, as the faithful and consistent lives of its friends. Its highest eulogy is read in their elevated and uniform devotion, their trust in God, their equanimity in change and trial, their fidelity in every relation, their integrity, purity, humility, benevolence. To form these virtues in them, to render them "perfect in every good word and work," is the very object to be effected by their adherence to the gospel. If it be not effected, discredit is brought upon the religion itself, which they profess to advocate, for the sake of a good in-

fluence, which their own lives declare it does not possess. But when their conversation is according to the blamelessness and purity of the Christian doctrine, fashioned upon the model of Jesus Christ, and illustrious with the consistent beauty of his excellences, it is a living and breathing eulogy of their faith, which every one sees, understands, feels, and acknowledges. The profound scholar, the learned theologian, the eloquent orator, may demonstrate, illustrate, and adorn; but the devout and humble believer, who "shows his faith by his works," will do far more to convince and win. Has it not always been so? Is it not when adorned by the charitable and unspotted lives of its friends, that the religion of Jesus has been most glorious and admirable? And has it not been cast down from its honorable place, whenever worldliness and hypocrisy have marked the character of its advocates? Does not the history of the church, in all ages, teach us, that, however glorious our religion may be in itself, yet the ill conduct of its friends may obscure that glory, and their exemplary lives render it more conspicuous? So that we are to regard it as given into our hands, a precious, solemn, awful charge, to be by us adorned and recommended to mankind, or to be by us disfigured, obscured, and made a reproach among men; — even as it is written, "My name is blasphemed among the nations because of you." What a responsibility, then, is ours! God grant that we may be able faithfully to sustain it!

In occupying the time allotted me on this occasion, I have endeavored to point out the principal means which it suggests of advancing religion through its public institutions, and of recommending it to the faith and admiration of men through the character of the doctrine preached, and by the zeal, liberality, and consistency of life, with which the great cause is advocated. To you, my dear brother,

these topics particularly address themselves. They concern your duties, your happiness, your success, in that calling to which you now devote yourself in the presence of God and man. It becomes the object of your life to uphold the worship and ordinances of the gospel, and to labor for the advancement of its glory in the world. May God grant you a great blessing! May he give you zeal, charity, and piety, and make you eminently serviceable to the cause of divine truth and human salvation. In the situation to which you have been called, there are circumstances of peculiar trial. They fill your mind with solicitude, and they demand from us expressions and acts of sympathy and aid, which I trust we shall not fail to render you. May they never be withheld, and never be ineffectual; and in every trial, may He especially be your support, who is nearer and greater than all earthly friends. There are also peculiar circumstances of encouragement and grounds of hope, which may well cheer and animate your exertions. May your best hopes of usefulness and happiness be fulfilled. May you find your separation from the friends of your youth compensated in the kindness and fidelity of those who welcome you as one of themselves. May you have the great happiness of witnessing the prevalence of pure and undefiled religion in all its heavenly and holy doctrines, in all its pure and comforting influences, in all its correcting and regenerating power; and having been with this people "fellow-helpers to the truth" on earth, may you and they see the full glory, and partake the unspeakable felicity of the blessed in the eternal kingdom of God.

Brethren of this Christian society: We offer you our congratulations on the auspicious occurrence of this day. Long and faithfully have you persevered in administering the worship and ordinances of God's house, according to

the dictates of your consciences; and, faithful to their dictates, you still persevere. You have the good wishes and prayers in your behalf of your sister churches. May God smile upon you, and send you prosperity. May he abundantly reward "all your patience of faith and labor of love," and cause this day to be remembered with devout gratitude, by you and your children, not only during this pilgrimage of your probation, but in the future world of eternal recompense.

And in order to this, let me exhort you in the words of the apostle — *Brethren, pray for us* — pray for your pastor; let your devotions encourage him; and, by your zealous and hearty coöperation, may you cause that *the word of the Lord have free course, and be glorified*, around you, beyond you, and throughout the world, *even as it is amongst you*.

SERMON XV.*

THE OBJECT AND MEANS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

COLOSSIANS I. 28.

WHOM WE PREACH, WARNING EVERY MAN AND TEACHING EVERY MAN IN ALL WISDOM, THAT WE MAY PRESENT EVERY MAN PERFECT IN CHRIST JESUS.

THE apostle, in these words, makes a comprehensive statement of the object and the means of the Christian ministry, which may afford suitable hints for our meditation on the present occasion. Its *object* is human perfection, and the *means*, such a preaching of Christ that every man shall be taught and warned. "Whom we preach, — warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

I shall attempt nothing more than to develop and apply the ideas thus suggested. The Christian ministry has for its OBJECT, human perfection; and for its MEANS, the preaching of Christ.

Human perfection: What is it? In what does it consist? Where is it to be found?

* Preached at the ordination of the Rev. Cyrus A. Bartol, as junior pastor of the West Church, in Boston, Wednesday, March 1, 1837.

Certainly it is not divine perfection. The finite and mortal does not compete with the infinite and immortal. But there is to the works of God, as well as to himself, a perfection appertaining, suitable to their own nature and end — a perfection which is impressed upon them at their original formation, or to which they are led by a process of development and growth. The beautiful order of the planetary worlds was probably made perfect when those worlds were first cast out upon their courses, and that light, which is the glorious emblem of its wondrous Former, burst into being in the fulness of its glory. But the plant that comes up from the bosom of the earth, and the animal that is to enjoy life amid its abundance and beauty, these, in all their tribes and orders, arrive at their perfection by an appointed progress. God has richly provided the means of that progress in the arrangements of his common providence, — where the warmth and the moisture of the sun and the air, the revolutions of the seasons, and the fertility of the earth, carry forward to their destined perfection the vegetable and the animal races. These provisions would be sufficient for man, if he too, like them, were merely the creature of this earth; but, as he has a higher nature, and is capable of a higher perfection than they, something further is needed, — an intellectual and spiritual providence, — the sun, and rain, and dew, and nurture of a spiritual life, — leading forward to a perfection in man, as superior to that of the animal, as immortal mind is superior to decaying matter.

This spiritual providence, designed to effect for the soul what an earthly providence effects for the body, is to be found in the operation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Not exclusively; for the great Father never left his children without witness and without care. But the chief, the favorite, the all-comprehending institution is that system of

grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, and which makes wise unto salvation; the efficient instrument of whose operation is the ministry.

What, then, is this perfection for which man is made, in aid of which the gospel is established, and for which all institutions of human origin had proved inadequate?

They had proved inadequate because of the inadequate notions of human perfection on which they were founded. The leaders of society, the founders and guides of nations, the patriots, the lawgivers, the philosophers, who made men their study and their care, all failed of introducing a perfect social condition, because they misapprehended man, his capacity, his destiny. They regarded him as a creature of time, and as a component part of the state. They legislated for him, they educated him, they provided for him, simply as holding a certain place in the commonwealth, as having a certain part to perform in the machinery of society, to which he was to be precisely fitted as a moving wheel, or a stationary beam; and society was accounted perfect and prosperous, when, through this process, every thing was in orderly operation, and the engine of state "worked well."

This has been the idea of the worldly and the politicians in all ages; and it was inadequate, because it left out of view the two essential elements on which the true conception of human attainment rests, namely, the spiritual equality and immortality of all men. Hence men have always been treated as having relation to time only, and without any regard to their capacity for progress. Provided the state was served and society prosperous, no one cared for the condition of the individual. He might be a mere tool, a machine, a slave, an engine for working mines or making pins. His intellect and his character were matters of no consequence; and it was held as absurd to raise any

from the accidental rank which their birth had assigned them, as to elevate the lower animals to an equal place with man. There was no recognition of the innate equality and immortality of the human soul. Christianity recognizes both. It sees in every individual man a partaker of the divine image, capable of infinite progress, certain of an infinite duration. It demands that perfection which belongs to the spiritual nature and the spiritual life; it would make each man perfect as an individual being; not in his relation to an accidental rank in this world, but absolutely; a thinking, self-governing, worshiping, heaven-destined creature; fitted for any position in society in this world, content with any that is allotted him, and dignifying the meanest by carrying into it the disinterested rectitude and piety which adorn the highest.

This is the perfection which Christianity proposes, and of which it exhibits a pattern in Christ, the meek and lowly, the holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; whose spirit was that of active and universal love; whose life was philanthropy; whose death was a sacrifice of himself, the just for the unjust; whose kingdom was not of this world, and yet the greatest benefaction of this world. This Son of God, contented with any condition, ready for any service, superior to all temptation, despising all selfishness, patient of any suffering, who walked among men more as some guardian angel from some superior sphere, than as sharer of their lot, and yet who felt with them, lived for them, planned, toiled, denied himself for them, more than any of the race had ever done; — this is the pattern of human perfection which God has placed before his children. To be thus is to be what the text calls "perfect in Christ Jesus." To make men such is the object of the spiritual providence administered through the gospel. When it has achieved this object, it will have created a condition of so-

ciety well worthy to be called "a new creation;" surpassing the best-regulated communities the earth has yet seen, in those very requisites of social order and worldly prosperity, for the sake of which the leaders of the world have been willing to stigmatize Christianity as an impracticable theory and a melancholy delusion.

And yet this is not the chief nor the final object. As the gospel does not approach men as the children of earth, but as children of God, not as subjects of human society, but as heirs of an immortal inheritance, so it is not satisfied with fitting them for the most perfect society on earth. It has thus accomplished its promise of the life that now is; there yet remains that of the life which is to come. The human being enters upon its spiritual career on earth, and enjoys it, — breathing the gales and odors of heaven even amid the fogs and darkness of these sublunary valleys. But its fulness of glory is in reserve; the work of its spiritual emancipation is complete only when it is presented faultless there before the presence of HIS glory with exceeding joy; when it has entered upon the joys which eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor the heart of man conceived; joys which God hath prepared for those who love him, and which belong to the spirits of just men MADE PERFECT.

Such being the *object*, our text designates the "preaching of Christ" as the *means* of the Christian ministry. This expression is used in a twofold sense in the New Testament, referring sometimes to the Savior himself in his character and offices, and sometimes to his religion.

When we apply it to his religion, and say that it has power to accomplish the great end of which we have spoken, the important idea to be kept in view is this — that we are to preach religion as peculiarly and distinctly *his* religion, resting on his authority as a divine messenger; that we

represent his doctrines as matters of revelation, not as truths to be sustained by human reason; his precepts as commands from the Supreme Lawgiver, to be obeyed, on the ground of rightful law, not on the ground that we can show them to be right or expedient; his sanctions as annunciations from the Judge of all the earth, not as the conclusions of a probable reasoning, or the suggestions of enlightened conscience. This is the thought to be insisted on. We are to preach Christianity. Man requires a law; Christianity is the supreme law, and it must be so presented in order to its full effect. No man preaches Christ who contents himself with setting forth the speculations and conclusions of his own mind on the great questions of divinity and ethics, with discussing and teaching theories of the divine government and human nature, the excellences and obligations of virtue, and the ingredients and methods of spiritual advancement and happiness. He may do this correctly, and yet, having done it on grounds of argument independent of the Savior's authority, it wants a Christian Savior, and is by no means preaching Christ. And, for this reason, though he may do it correctly, he cannot do it with effect, for he wields no power but his own adroitness in argument, and his own reputation for wisdom. He is backed by nothing stronger than himself. He stands in need of a far mightier power, — the power of express revelation, the authority of a divine teacher.

While men had nothing better, nothing else, than their own exertions of mind to depend upon, it was right that they should rely on them; and they did so with a sagacity and eloquence which have made the names of many ancient sages immortal. But it all resulted in nothing. It will result in nothing now, if the teachers of morals, like them, rely on their own minds. They cannot hope to argue with

greater ability, or plead with greater impressiveness, than Socrates, Plato, Seneca, or Tully, to mention no more; but the least in the kingdom of heaven are greater than they, and have won more souls to virtue, — for they have appealed to an authority which these men possessed not, and have had their weakness made strong in a divine power, to which those more gifted worthies could not appeal. It is not ancient Platonism, nor modern Eclecticism, neither the dogmas of the dark ages, nor the metaphysics of the eighteenth century, nor the mysticism of any century, that is to speak strongly to the hearts of men, and bring them home to God. It is Christianity. It is the simple truth of Jesus, spoken on his authority, proclaimed as a direct message from God, illustrated and made effective by his life and death.

Illustrated and made effective by his life and death; — this is essential to the full preaching of his religion. Such is the inseparable connection of the Savior with his doctrine, that it can never be appreciated or effective, unless accompanied by the preaching of himself in his character and offices. For, as we have already seen, Christ is the pattern of the perfection to be wrought out. There is no other model with which men can compare themselves; the idea of what they are to arrive at is nowhere else portrayed in a distinct, vivid, encouraging form. Men must distinctly know what they are to become; and no description in words, no command or exhortation, could so inform them, as that living example. They might read their duty in his word —

> "But in his life the law appears
> Drawn out in living characters."

Christ is also a Lawgiver, bringing to us, from the universal Father, that rule of holiness, without conformity to

which no one can see the Lord. This authority of the lawgiver must be proclaimed, and acknowledged, and submitted to, or the law of perfection never can be observed.

Christ is also the divine Teacher; and there is no acquisition of the wisdom requisite to guide and prompt the soul in its spiritual aspirations, except from the sublime truth and inspiring promises which he promulgates.

Christ is the Savior, the suffering and the interceding; and there is no motive to soften the human heart, subdue the wayward will, overcome the earthly and selfish tendencies of its perverse nature and a corrupting world, like those drawn from his constraining love, his disinterested toils, his death of agony, and his offices of perpetual grace.

Christ is the Judge of men; the Father hath given him authority to execute judgment; and if they are to stand before his bar to receive at last according to the deeds done in the body, it is needful that they now acknowledge and honor him; that now, walking by that word of his which is to judge them at the last day, their consciences may anticipate his decision and save their souls from shame.

It is by thus setting Christ before men as their Teacher, their Example, their Lawgiver, Redeemer, and Judge, and as most intimately related to them in all his offices of power and love, that men are to be brought to understand and aspire after the perfection which he sets before them. Reverence for his commission, admiration of his divine purity, gratitude for his inestimable services, love for his love, and a longing to know and dwell with him, — these, and all the sentiments which belong to so high, so peculiar, so affecting a relation as that of a soul to its Redeemer, operate as nothing else has ever done to excite the undying desire and determination to live the life of the Spirit, that, when absent from the body, they may be present with

the Lord. And, O, how marvellously has this connection with Jesus wrought upon the human character! Mistaken as it may have been, obscured by mystery, made wild by fanaticism, forced into the service of hypocrisy, superstition, and spiritual pride, — yet never has it failed to exalt and purify the souls in which the sense of it resided; err as men might, their nearness to him had a sanctifying power; by being with him, they became like him; if they only touched the hem of his garment, virtue came out to them; and whenever and wherever, with simple-hearted reliance, they have taken him for their Master and walked in his path, they have seemed like a company of angels returning to their home.

We have seen what is that perfection of which the text speaks as the object of the Christian ministry, and how the preaching of Christ is to be the means of effecting it. There is still another point, thrown out by the apostle, necessary to be attended to, in order to the full development of his idea. If the perfection to be wrought out be, as we have seen, that of individual character, then, not only is Christianity to be preached in the manner described, but also with a particular view to that specific result; "warning *every man* and teaching *every man*." This is a view to which too great importance can hardly be attached. If, as unquestionably is the fact, Christianity can accomplish its purpose in the world only by its influence over individuals, then it is essential that those who administer it take care to direct its influence to individuals. And it may be fairly inquired, when we speak of the causes of the yet unsatisfactory ascendency of the gospel in the world, whether much is not to be attributed to the neglect of this consideration; to the circumstance that Christian truth is addressed to society as a mass, rather than to its individual

members; that the congregation is preached to, rather than the persons who compose it; and that, through this generalizing process, this failing to individualize, and circumscribe, and apply, the truth is diluted and enfeebled.

Religion is a personal thing; character, accountableness, reward, punishment, happiness, all are personal things. If one have not personal religion, he has no religion. He can have it only by the immediate application of Christian truth to his own heart and character; and it is the business of him, who dispenses that truth, to do it in such manner, as to insure that immediate application.

So true is this, that of all the phrases which have been used to express the design of the ministry, there is no one that so exactly describes it as this, — the design of the ministry is, the promotion of personal religion.

What else shall we say? Is it to uphold the church? to spread Christianity? to maintain the order of society? to save souls? to make men better? to regenerate the world? How is either of these to be done, except by making individual men religious? State the case as we please; extend the sphere of action and influence as widely as we may; make it to cover nations and stretch through ages, to overturn universal heathenism, and bring on the full millennium of the human race, — it all comes back to this, personal religion; for it is just so far as this prevails, and no farther, that Christianity spreads, and its benign effects are realized.

Let the minister, then, direct his efforts to this one object; let this be the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, of all his work.

If any one supposes that this would be to narrow the sphere of ministerial action, which ought rather to be construed as extending to all the institutions of man and society, to letters, and science, and education, in all their

forms; that the rule just laid down would withdraw the patronage and service of the minister from all but the little round of technical church duty,—I reply, Not at all. This has been provided for in the spirit of the remarks already made. There is no project devised, no enterprise set on foot, for the elevation of man, that should not have Christ's servant for its advocate. If he be found lagging behind when society is pressing on, he is false to his profession and to his Master. Earth has no such friend to universal human improvement as Christianity. But, then, he is equally false, if he substitute those means of improvement which ought to be the accompaniments and result of religious principle, in the place of that religious principle which is before all, beyond all, and above all; if he allow this secondary action, this external, and it may be superficial, it may be unprincipled, devotion to intellectual and social advancement, to usurp the place and the honors which are due to devotion to God. No. These are all well; but they might have existed without a revelation from God, or the toils and sacrifices of the Redeemer. They are all well; but they are compatible with a heathen state of society, and are upheld by many in Christian lands who pretend not to be more sanctified than heathen, or to think that the civilization of a Christian people is better than that of a pagan. They may be, they must be, brought into subjection to religious truth, made subsidiary to the grand ends of the Christian institutions, "schoolmasters, to lead to Christ;" but they are not the peculiar object of these institutions. First the kingdom of God, then these. They will help to strengthen, establish, adorn that kingdom; therefore they are to be advocated by the servants of the kingdom; but that kingdom it is which is, first of all, to be built up, its spiritual life first of all to be kindled; and all the glories of all the kingdoms

of the earth would poorly compensate the apostle of Christ, who should substitute the other inferior means of human perfection in the place of this.

And it must not be forgotten, that the method we speak of was that of Jesus Christ himself. He called Nathanael by name, he summoned Levi from his seat of public office, he took Peter and John from their fishing-boats, and separated Paul from the Pharisees. Bent as he was on affecting the whole world, powerful to this end as was his public ministry when he spake words of divine eloquence, and did works of divine power in the presence of wondering thousands, yet he knew that the strength of his action and the hope of his success lay in obtaining a lodgment for his system in individual minds; in enlisting, not the general goodwill of society, but the whole souls of a few of its members. And it needs but a cursory reading of the Acts and the Epistles to perceive how the apostles also laid stress on individual action. "They taught publicly and *from house to house.*" Paul said to the Ephesians, "I ceased not day and night to warn *every one* of you with tears."

Indeed, how otherwise could the new religion prevail, than by being received by one individual after another? The general mass of hearers might be affected to a certain degree by the reasonings and appeals which they heard; and it is doubtless true that pagan doctrines and pagan morality were modified by this circumstance; but the pagan world did not become believers through this operation. So, also, at the time of the reformation, the preaching of the reformers produced a salutary effect on the mass of the community beyond the Protestants themselves, and modified the condition of the Catholic church. But Christianity and Protestantism never prevailed a step beyond the list of individual converts. In all our congregations, in like manner,

there is a general salutary influence from the preaching of the gospel on the mass of the hearers; the standard of thought and of action is higher with them than it would otherwise be. But it does not rise to the Christian measure; it does not pretend to do so. This secondary effect of Christian institutions is not to satisfy us, as if it were the whole effect designed. We want the direct effect; and we may be sure that religion is successfully administered only when this direct effect is discerned. Yet we are too ready to rest content with the secondary, the reflected, neutralized, negative operation; as if this divine apparatus, with its power to re-create the dead, were put into our hands only to bring about that moderate morality which the prudence of this world teaches; as if the charge of souls were committed to us only that we might be able to say, "To be sure, we cannot name any individuals that have been affected by the truth we preach, but we *hope* that we have not wrought in vain."

God forbid that this hope, indefinite as it may be, should be taken away from us; it is too precious. In the weakness of our hearts, in the trials of our toil, in the weariness and despondency of our too often disappointed souls, this vague *hope* that we have not labored in vain is sometimes the only balm that remains to cheer us, and in our secret thanksgivings we bless God that even that is vouchsafed to us. But is it not worth inquiry, whether, if we aimed at more, we should not attain more? If our object is general and vague, must not our effect be such? If it be no part of our plan to produce individual results, is it strange that we do not produce them? As we sow we must reap.

I have thus glanced at the several points suggested by the pregnant words of our text. They are points of urgent interest to all who are concerned in the prosperity of our

religious institutions, and the progress of Christianity in the world. They are peculiarly interesting on an occasion which calls to mind the importance and duty of the Christian minister. We remind ourselves, and we tell our young brother, that the end of our calling is the spiritual progress and perfection of men; that he and we are agents in carrying forward that great moral re-creation of the world which Christ began, and for which the saints have toiled and suffered in all ages; that we are operators in that course of spiritual providence, by which God has ordained to accomplish in his children the end of their being; that the means to be used by us are, the faithful promulgation of that doctrine which Christ taught with authority from God, accompanied by all the influences of light, attraction, and power, which are imparted to it by his own character and his relations to man; and that the manner of effecting this is by its adaptation and application to men; not in the general mass, but as individuals, independent, responsible individuals. That ministry cannot be wholly unblest which is conformed to this idea. Those institutions cannot fall which are built upon this model.

But when we say this, we bear in mind, and must not leave the subject without remarking it, that these institutions are not simply that of public worship, and that the power of the office is to be found elsewhere as well as in the pulpit. It resides in the whole influence of that sacred connection which binds pastor and flock in one spiritual bond. We always remember this when we speak of the efficacy of preaching. For what is preaching? Not the oratory of a high pulpit, the formal rhetoric of an official man in his public place, the elaborate discussion of a holy day. Many seem to think that there can be no preaching except in the church, before a great congregation, with a

chosen text, and a stately array of method and periods. But is the preaching of the servants thrust into such narrow limits, when the Master preached on the mountain, in the boat, by the way-side, in the court of the Pharisees, and in the sitting-room of Mary and Martha? Surely the servant is a preacher every where; his whole pastoral walk is a sermon, every house in his parish is a church, every parlor a pulpit, every day a Sabbath. He may deliver no *sermon* out of season, but he will *preach* in season and out of season; and being able, in this more private ministry, to adapt himself more entirely to the wants of those whom he addresses, he will teach and warn every man more successfully, with closer appeals to the conscience, with heartier urgency to the affections, with more irresistible arguments for truth and God. The faithful pastor is the most powerful preacher. There are no sermons, in chapel or cathedral, like those which drop from his loving lips when the child is on his knee, or the silence of the death-chamber is broken by the low tone of his prayer. He who thus preaches every where, by example as well as by word, by life as well as by doctrine, preaches better also in the pulpit; for then his voice is not that of a public orator, but of a friend and brother; his counsel is not the official dictation of a public functionary, but the advice of a sympathizing friend. Hence the power of the ministry is as much out of the pulpit as in it, and we are always to include the pastoral work in that preaching of Christ by which the salvation and perfection of men are to be effected.

Let us have faith in its power. Why is it powerless, except through our skepticism and timidity? how hindered, but by the unbelief of those who speak and those who hear? Let us reverence the great end for which it was instituted. Of what use to us the mighty apparatus, excepting as we are

led by it to know and seek our personal sanctification and perfection? Let us realize the connection into which it introduces us with the Son of God. Of what avail to us his mediation, his law, his example, his encouragement, if we follow him not into the spiritual life, and fail of becoming joint heirs with him of the kingdom of heaven, and the eternal benediction of the Father?

Let the servants of Christ take heed how they speak; let the people take heed how they hear. Let them go hand in hand, following "the Lamb whithersoever he goeth," and helping each other onward till they arrive together, perfect in Christ Jesus, to take their place with the redeemed and glorified in heaven.

SERMON XVI.*

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER A DEFENDER OF THE GOSPEL.

PHILIPPIANS I. 17

I AM SET FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE GOSPEL.

In the act for which we are now assembled, we commemorate the grace of Almighty God in making to mankind a revelation of his will, and in establishing through Jesus Christ those institutions which shall conduct to salvation and heaven. We do something, in this act, towards perpetuating those institutions and rendering them effectual. When Jesus, their founder, left the world, he committed them, and with them the hopes of the human race, to his eleven apostles. They were his ambassadors to the world. They were guardians for him of the dispensation which he had set up. And when they went to their rest, — some by fire, and some by crucifixion, and one by a good old age, — they transmitted the holy charge to other hands, and thus sent it down from age to age. The race of those who have taken it up has never become extinct. Every man who

* Delivered at the ordination of Rev. Chandler Robbins, over the Second Congregational Church, in Boston, December 4, 1833.

joins himself to the company of the preachers, and takes charge of one of the Savior's little flocks, is one more added to the band of those who are "set for the defence of the gospel." Another joins that sacred band to-day; and as we help him to gird on his armor, and lay upon him the hands of charge and congratulation, it may not be unseasonable to speak of the nature of his enterprise and office, under the point of view presented by the apostle in our text. What is it that he is to defend? Against what enemies? With what modes of action and influence? These are the three points of my discourse.

I. *What is it which he has undertaken to defend?* Of what is he the minister? The answer is, A REVELATION FROM GOD; a revelation of *truth*, *duty*, and *eternal life*. This he is pledged to proclaim and advocate. He is to propound its doctrines, enforce its law, excite by its sanctions.

Herein lies the peculiarity of his position. Other men have taught truth, have inculcated duty, have argued for immortality. But he speaks of them as matters of revelation; he speaks as bearing communications respecting them from God. And thus he is set apart from all other teachers, as the gospel is set apart from all other systems. He does not advocate it, because he judges it to be upon the whole a better doctrine than that of the Stoics or Epicureans; or as one which is very likely to be true, or, if not, so useful that it may be well to teach it to common people as true. But he takes it, explicitly and absolutely, as the revealed truth of God; not as human opinion, but as divine law; not as what he has reasoned out, but what he has received. This is the circumstance to which it owes its value. It would be worth little more than the venerable philosophy of the ancient sages, if it were, like them, the mere offspring of human opinion. To this, too, it owes its power; for its

doctrine comes with authority; not as the intuitive wisdom of this man, or the plausible theory of that, dependent on the logical skill of him who advances it, having, therefore, no more weight than is derived from his power of reasoning, and which may be reasoned down as it was reasoned up; but an authoritative message from the infinite Father of truth.

Undoubtedly there are propositions relative to the gospel which are mere matter of opinion, and which must be discussed as such, if discussed at all, with great self-diffidence. But that the gospel itself is *a revelation of truth, a law of duty, and a promise of life*, is not one of those propositions, and ought not to be so regarded by him who has undertaken its ministry. Hence, in preaching its *doctrines*, they are to be treated in the way of explanation and application; — not to be taught as the instructions of human intellect, and shown to be probably true according to the light of nature; — but simply proved to have been taught by Christ, and then from other sources illustrated. Its *duties* he will treat in the same way, as binding, because the commandment of God, — not simply as what is advisable and expedient for the good of man, and the *sanctions* of a future state, — not, like the arguing of the old sages, as being probably thus and thus, according to the best light we have, but as being certainly thus, because we have absolutely the best light. This is what is done by him who defends THE GOSPEL. And he, who, instead of this, puts the whole up to debate, states it all as so much matter open to discussion, on which either side may with almost equal propriety be defended, — that man betrays the cause which he undertook to advocate; he treats as an unsettled question what he engaged to enforce as divine truth, and places the whole at the mercy of his own didactic skill. And what can be the result in the minds of

his hearers, but a state of indifference and uncertainty? There can be no strong faith, — therefore no strong interest — therefore no strong influence of Christian principle — no high action of Christian hope. There are grand but simple verities, through whose power the soul becomes mighty; but if they are regarded only as theses for discussion, problems for theoretical solution, they have lost their soul-moving and life-giving energy. Faith is powerful just in proportion as it becomes assurance. If ever Christian truth has reformed the sinful and strengthened the tempted, given comfort to the desponding and triumph to the martyr, overcome the world and regenerated kingdoms, it has been because it was received as the certain declaration of God, — because his voice was heard uttering the law, proclaiming the promise, and issuing the threat. If the minister is ever to see the fruit of his labors in conversion from sin, in the growth of holiness, in the consolation and peace of a heavenly hope, it must be, it can only be, by persuading his hearers to receive what he delivers as the disciples received the preaching of Paul, — "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God." And if, with intent to redeem the world, ambassadors should go forth merely declaring to men what are their own opinions on great subjects of truth and duty, instead of announcing the message as from God, the disciples of Plato or Confucius would convert the nations as soon as they. No; Christ has taught us better. "I have given to them the words THOU gavest to me, and they have known surely that thou didst send me." And therefore they are not to take a place among the wise and the disputers of this world. They are to be preachers of a revelation.

II. *Against what enemies is the minister to defend this revelation?* This was our second question; and the answer

is, Against all who *oppose its truth, neglect its duties, and despise its sanctions.* These are the enemies of the gospel. They are to be answered, rebuked, converted, made its friends.

He has taken up the great defence of Christianity, and placed himself on the rampart of its institutions. He has devoted himself to the promotion of its interests. Fervently persuaded that it is from God — that it teaches the truth of truths — that it is the great moral power of the world — that it is the great sustaining hope of the human soul; — having deeply experienced the illumination of its doctrine, the sanctification of its law, and the glorious peace of its promise, he longs to extend its benignant sway; and he earnestly inquires what are the hinderances which need to be removed.

First, he discovers those who set themselves against its *truth.* INFIDELITY stands in the way; — assuming sometimes the garb of Philosophy, speaking lofty words of wisdom, and pretending to look down contemptuously on revelation as unfavorable to the development of the intellect and the culture of manly virtue; sometimes in a garb of depraved and coarse malignity, — hating the gospel for its purity, and loud in its words of audacious calumny and obscene blasphemy. Side by side with this bold assailant of all that is sacred and good, he sees INDIFFERENCE, standing in the way of the light, and hindering the influence of the truth. And what a formidable portion of the community does this characterize! resolutely sunk in apathy, wholly unconcerned for spiritual good, impeding all progress, discouraging all exertion, neither entering into life themselves, nor permitting others to enter. How many, alas! of such does he behold among those who rank themselves as Christians! How many of his Master's foes does

he discover to be of his own household! — thwarting by their worldliness and coldness all projects for the promotion of that cause which nominally they favor! With these, and besides these, he beholds the chief enemy, — the many-headed, the omnipresent foe, SIN, — in its infinite forms and inscrutable disguises, — subtle as the serpent in the garden, and venomous as the sting of death. How it blinds the understanding, hardens the heart, perverts the conscience, makes truth distasteful, and the thought of God unwelcome! How it rides triumphant in high places, spreading around oppression and blighting, turning power into a curse, and wealth into a fountain of corruption! How it steals, like a pestilence, into low places, and rears those seminaries of depravity, which make the good tremble for the very existence of the social fabric! So that, with the institutions of the gospel flourishing, the will of God every where published, the wonderful fact of a future life familiarly known, — society yet lies deep sunk in selfishness, earthliness, and sensuality. There is much to be done, — blessed be God, there is much doing! — but much remains to be done to make the community Christian, in that true and sufficient sense which shall satisfy the wishes and hopes of a philanthropic mind, and accomplish the purpose of the Savior. Much is to be done before public opinion will be always right, every man honest and temperate, every family well ordered and peaceful, and penitentiaries and prisons unnecessary. Alas! to look even upon our stated, sober, church-going congregations, how much is to be done before the power of the gospel shall be over them universally and purely! before all shall have parted with their sins, and become devoted followers of Jesus! before every house shall be a temple, every heart an altar, every hand a fountain of charity and truth, duty and heaven become the favorite concerns of all minds!

And who is to bring on that happy day? Who is to watch and toil for the accomplishment of that desirable consummation? Certainly every good Christian and good man will join his prayers and his labors. But if it be asked, whose duty it is to be foremost in devising and effecting measures for the enterprise, — certainly it must be answered, *The minister of Christ.* By his very office it appertains to him. He is not to wait till he is called forth by the public voice; he is not to hold back till urged on by the quicker zeal of others; he is not to consult first of all his own reputation and the fear to jeopard his influence. He is to be the first to speak. He is to stand in the front rank of all opposition to the foes of religion and man; and while he seeks to "give offence in nothing, that the ministry be not blamed," he will yet be prompt to cry aloud and spare not, as a leader, not a follower, in the camp of the Lord, against all the hosts of infidelity, indifference, and sin.

III. This brings us to our third question, — *By what method is he to effect the work thus allotted him?* And here I cannot avoid beginning with a passing remark relative to that prime, essential matter, the *spirit* which he is to maintain. The weapons of his warfare are not carnal, but spiritual; and if he contend against infidelity, worldliness, or sin, with carnal weapons, — that is, in any spirit but the serious, devout, forbearing, gentle spirit of Christ, — he becomes himself an enemy, instead of a defender. If he assail infidelity with the ribaldry and indecency with which infidelity assaults Christianity; if he denounce his erring fellow-men with the disingenuousness and reviling of a vulgar political partisan; if he treat even abandoned sinners (whom he ought to convert) with indignant outcry and violent abuse, — he fights the battle for Heaven in the armor of the prince of darkness; he takes a tone no more

tolerable in a messenger of the cross, than would be the blasphemy of the damned on the threshold of heaven. Let him remember the motto given by the apostle, —*In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves;* and that other saying, — *If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

When we pass beyond this remark respecting the general spirit of his ministry, we find ourselves embarrassed by the vastness of the field we enter. The methods by which he shall advocate and advance the gospel, whose whole life and business are consecrated to that work, are too various to allow of even enumeration in the time before us. His own personal character and familiar example in the world, are to be made a standing argument for the power and beauty of Christian principle. His conversation among men must be always directed with ready speech to recommend and strengthen the cause he serves. His voice, his pen, his time, his services, his purse, must be ever at the command of any projects which are advanced for the good of mankind; and he must show that Christianity is the friend of every thing excellent, by being himself its friend. In his pastoral walks, where he moves among his people as their confidential religious friend, he has peculiar opportunities for advancing the interests of religion, — such as no other being on earth can possess, and such as he could possess in no other relation. For, on all the most momentous and trying emergencies of life, when the heart is most susceptible, and cries out after its God; in the sanctuary of domestic life, in the privacy of the sick chamber, at the bedside of the dying, — wherever and whenever the soul feels most, — there he may be; there he may plead for Christ and heaven; there he may take hold of immortal sympathies and immortal wants, and win those to God who might

elsewhere be inaccessible. And besides these various means and occasions, there still remains the public assembly and the house of prayer, where he stands forth as the recognized ambassador of Christ, pleading, in the face of heaven and earth, the cause of truth, duty, and life.

On all these points, it is impossible, as I said, to dwell. I make a selection, and illustrate but one of them, — the last. I would show how this important function of preaching will take its character from the consideration that he is set for the defence of the gospel; and this both as regards the *subjects* and the *manner* of it.

With respect to the subjects, it will be, as already intimated, the preaching of THE GOSPEL; not of his own opinions gathered from observation and reflection; not of disquisitions in ethical philosophy; not of the minor proprieties and conventional courtesies of life, or the superficial moralities of society; but of the written gospel, as a revelation from God; expounding its records, illustrating its propositions, developing and elucidating its eternal principles, upholding them in their evidences against cavil and objection, and urging them in their influences on the reason, affections, and conscience, as the only truth which can make wise unto salvation. In like manner he will treat its duties; not as diffidently advising that course which seems to him on the whole expedient, honorable, or rational; but as pronouncing the law of God, declaring the eternal rule of right. He will do this, not in general terms, but in the specific peculiarities which the precepts and example of Christ have imparted to it; and will thus present to men a practical morality, far different from that of the heathen philosophy, and far higher than the acknowledged standard of even the Christianized community. He will treat also of the sanctions of a future retribution. He will always

accompany the doctrines of truth and righteousness with that of a judgment to come. He will never allow himself to recognize man in any other character than that of an ACCOUNTABLE IMMORTAL, or to address him from the pulpit in any other relation; for he remembers that the kingdom of his Lord is not of this world, and that he toiled and suffered for men only because he felt for them as destined to eternity.

He is thus evidently prohibited much of that dreamy and speculative discussion about secondary matters which has rendered so many pulpits unfruitful and sleepy. There are permitted to him only the strong, stirring, urgent subjects which make preaching seem a matter of life and death. Those vast, sublime, searching, thrilling topics, — God, eternity, and judgment, repentance, faith, and immortal progress, — which are mighty to work upon the soul and call it out to a new life; — topics of a magnitude and interest *needed* by him who is to throw down in one day all the evil influences on character which the world has been building up for six, and to establish in one day an influence which the world for six, with a thousand hands, will be striving to overthrow. With such a work before him, he has no time, (God forbid that he should have a heart!) for any less important exhibition, — for preaching any thing but THE WORD. God forbid that he should have a moment's solicitude for the petty elegances of speech, or the good-will of a frivolous and worldly assembly. Let him be solicitous only to declare the counsel of God, to divide rightly the word of truth, and if he can win men to receive and honor it by an evident attachment and a consistent life, he may despise the contempt of the superficial, and thank God that his work is blest.

Then as to the manner in which this must be done. It must, in the first place, be *rational*. No part of the gospel

can be irrationally defended; certainly not at the present day. This is neither the age nor the country for a religion built upon assumption to be received upon assertion. Indeed, it never was true of Christianity, that it demanded any other than a rational defence; as Paul well knew, when he so constantly "reasoned from the Scriptures" in his preaching, and filled his epistles with close and earnest argument. Preaching, therefore, must be reasoning; it is not declamation, nor exhortation, nor fine description, nor the mere outpouring of a burning mind, though sometimes they are made to pass for it. In no other department of serious eloquence would these modes of address be thought sufficient. Neither in the senate, nor at the bar, nor in the popular assembly, would it be tolerated, that men should deal only in flowery elegance, hortatory harangue, or mere entreaty. They are required to show reason for the part they take. They are required to make business-like speeches. The speeches of the great Grecian were little else than close and rapid argument. They owed their heat and force to the impetuosity and compactness of the reasoning. And surely the greatest of subjects, the most momentous of human interests, is not to be enforced with less appeal to sound reasoning. Men must be addressed in a practical, business-like way here as well as elsewhere. Accustomed to reason and to hear reasoning on all other subjects, they cannot, they ought not surrender their understandings, their consciences, their wills, their characters, their all, to the entreaties or the assertions of any man, without good reason given and received. They cannot, and they ought not, take any man's word for any view of any important truth.

True, as we have insisted, the minister of Christ speaks from authority. But not his own; it is his Master's authority. And he must prove that he has his authority before he

can use it. Even the divine Master himself employed argument and proof to establish his authority; and is the minister to do less now? Is he to hope that even a cordial fellow-disciple will acknowledge the obligation of what he teaches, unless it be proved that his master taught it? Will he convince the cool-hearted atheist, the sophistical skeptic, the honest doubter, the eager and keen-sighted inquirer, without reasoning? Can he hope that the worldly, the sensual, the devotees of pleasure, the dead in trespasses and sins, will be turned to duty and faith, unless he can show them *reasons* for turning? And still further; when the growing inquisitiveness of the times has imparted to men so much more real or fancied acuteness of mind, can he expect that they will yield to the arguments or embrace the doctrines of darker ages, on the ground of their sacredness and antiquity, without investigation? Surely not. The minister who thus judges takes a false position, and palsies his own right hand. He forgets that he no longer occupies an office of power, that he now stands on a level with his fellow-men, that his adventitious advantages are few. Those few are invaluable, indeed; but they will avail him little, unless, like other men in important affairs, he exhibit a sound mind and rational judgment, and treat his fellow-men as beings of intelligence. The most powerful preaching, therefore, will be that of argument; not of subtilties and refinements, of formal technicalities, and metaphysical abstractions. Theology, unhappily, has been so much at the mercy of the scholastics, who have dissected it and anatomized it, and laid it by in dry preparations and naked skeletons, that the word *argument* in religion is apt to bring up the idea of what is forbidding. But it is not the arguments of pedantry that we speak of. There are other sources and forms of reasoning than those of the schools,—

from which Jesus drew and which the apostles used; the inexhaustible premises of nature, the affluent fountains of human affection, the character of God, the history of his providence, the declarations of his word, the promises of immortality, the destinies of the intelligent soul. These, and such as these, are sources of arguments for the pulpit, within the comprehension of all, and interesting to the affections of all. Let them be applied to with the earnestness which indicates deep interest and affectionate zeal, and they cannot fail to convince, to move, and to persuade.

For this is an equally important consideration, — *Earnestness*. What will the preacher do without earnestness? what justice to himself, to his hearers, to his argument, to the cause he has espoused? Speakers upon all other subjects are earnest. When they would convince or move men, they talk as if they were themselves convinced and moved; they throw their mind and heart into their words, and thus make way into the mind and heart of others. Will it do for the preacher to be less earnest? Are his topics less momentous? or is the cause which he pleads more easily won than that of the statesman and barrister? Are men more readily persuaded to love God and work out their salvation, than to vote with their own party or give a righteous verdict in a suit at law? And shall questions of property, interest, or politics, be discussed with the warm energy of a glowing mind, — and are the attributes of the adorable God, and the destinies of immortal souls, to be coldly treated in formal dissertations? There is no advocate who pleads a cause like the advocate of the gospel. He stands in the place of Jesus Christ; to maintain and render effective those beneficent institutions, by him founded, on which rests the hope of the human race through all ages and nations, and of the human soul throughout eternity. He sees and knows that

except so far as they prevail, darkness is over the earth and gross darkness over the people; he knows that just so far as they prevail, light breaks upon men, and earth becomes heaven. Yet he sees their blessed influences opposed. The state of society, the pursuits of present interest, the principles of a sensual life, the depravity of many, and the ignorance of more, perpetually thwart their gracious operation, and they are sustained and powerful, if at all, through a perpetual struggle. Intermit the struggle, and their light flickers, and the darkness comes over the land again. Who but the minister is to sustain that struggle? Who but he is set for the defence of that beacon light? And when, therefore, he reflects what a responsibility is laid upon him, — when he looks on his fellow-men groping in darkness and folly, turned into brutes by the horrible enchantments of earth and sense, and knows that to him is committed the talisman by which they are to be rechanged to their human and celestial dignity, — must he not feel that he is to be up and doing? that his most strenuous zeal is demanded? that the most piercing and thrilling cry of his voice must be lifted? How else shall he so much as catch the attention of those slumbering and giddy souls? How else can his voice be so much as heard amid the loud din of business and the resounding choruses of pleasure? How else can he hope to arrest the thoughtless throng of triflers, and persuade to listen the scornful doubter, or put to shame the coarse blasphemer, or call into life the dead in trespasses? O my brethren! what a work is that of the ministry, when we observe what is to be done, and what obstacles there are to doing it? One would think that earth and heaven would be moved by our endeavors. Yet how little do our pulpits exhibit of the great commotion! How seldom are the thunders which shake the senate-house and the forum heard

pealing through the temple of God! How rarely are the passions which weep and tremble at the fictions of the stage called on for a tear at the foot of the altar, or made to glow or tremble at the realities of eternal truth! We are all correctness, decorum, and sobriety. We are careful to commit no faults, we shock nobody's taste, we roughly waken no one's slumbers. To be sure, we know that men ought to be interested in heavenly things, and that, if they do not count religion the one thing needful, they will be ruined. But we think it would be risking a great deal to tell them so, bluntly; and if our plainness should chance to offend them, why, then our influence over them is gone, and we can never do them any more good. And is influence worth having, if we may not use it to bring men to God? As if the ministry were worth maintaining, if it be only an institution for bringing men together once a week, to be entertained with pleasant pieces of composition! As well might we flee away from our mission, like Jonah, as thus render it inefficient by a timid and time-serving delivery.

There is, therefore, one further thing to characterize the preacher, — *plainness;* and this in two senses; — that of speaking plain truths, and that of speaking them in plain terms. Very little is effected toward establishing over men the authority and influence of the Christian religion, by him who will not in perfect simplicity teach its plain truths, precepts, and sanctions; but who, instead of this, only philosophizes about them; or amuses his hearers with speculations and treatises on far-sought questions of curiosity; or charms their ears with musical periods, and the careful pomp of magniloquent declamation; or uses the language of the learned for the instruction of the ignorant. If truth is to be communicated, it must be made easily comprehensible by those to whom it is addressed. If hearts are to be won,

they must be spoken to in the language of the heart. And so long as Christian congregations are composed of all orders and classes of society, of women and children as well as of men, and of the unlearned more than the learned, so long they must be addressed in terms of the most intelligible plainness on those plain and simple subjects, which not only alone interest, but alone concern them. Is it not mortifying, when an assembly of waiting and needy souls is looking up to learn of Christ and heaven, to hear the wise man read to them some elaborate dissertation, like a university prize essay, for which it is impossible that they should feel more interest than for a paper in the Philosophical Transactions respecting the atmosphere of the planet Saturn? Is it not mortifying to observe a sensible man, who, if he had been a lawyer, would have spoken to a jury sensibly, as a man speaks to men, — now, because he is a theologian, talk solemnly to his bewildered and yawning congregation on some subject in which they have no concern, and in some phraseology which he himself would not dream of employing on any other occasion of real life? Of what value are subtile and ingenious disquisitions to souls that have not yet mastered the elements of religious truth? Of what account the most acute and convincing argumentation, if so put that it cannot be apprehended by the hearers? Of what avail the heartiest zeal, if it be wasted on a topic inappropriate, or cloked by unfamiliar speech, which falls dead upon the ear? Yet how much of this has there always been in the Christian church! How has the simplicity of Christ been corrupted by the pedantry of mistaken learning, or buried beneath the mass of cumbrous verbiage! How often has the most complicated instruction been given on subjects which required the simplest, and to those audiences which needed the plainest!

But I must pause; — for who can speak worthily of this great function, by which God has appointed to convert and save the world? Who, brethren, has not in his mind an idea of the power, grandeur, efficiency, of this divine instrument, which has never yet been realized? Who does not look with dissatisfaction on what he has already done, and with despair on what he is likely to do? Yet, blessed be God! he requires of us no extravagant and impossible attainment. Nor are we to fancy that none are true preachers of his word, who do not arrive at a certain excellence in a certain way. The gospel is not so stinted a field as that would imply. There are diversities of operations and gifts, all equally valuable, and all of the same spirit. We cannot suppose that the quiet and affectionate John preached like the impetuous Peter, or that James rushed upon the souls of men with the torrent and tempest of the impassioned Paul, — or that those whom Jesus called *sons of thunder* were just such preachers as those whom the disciples called *sons of consolation*. There is no one standard. There may be, as there must be, differences. But it was required then, it must be required now, that all *preach* THE GOSPEL, — *rationally, earnestly, plainly*. It is not necessary that all be masters of an impetuous, exciting, overwhelming eloquence. The gentle and quiet, the still small voice, may save as many souls as the imposing and magnificent. But, whether loud or soft, whether in thunders or in whispers, there must be the same life-giving truth — the same spiritual unction — the same simple-hearted earnestness. These it is that will be owned and blessed. These it is that will win souls to heaven, and accomplish the mission of the Son of God.

Of the things which we have spoken, this, then, is the sum. The minister of Christ advocates his gospel as a

REVELATION; making known truth, proclaiming a law, announcing eternal sanctions. He upholds it as such against INFIDELITY, INDIFFERENCE, and SIN, by every effort of a devoted heart and life; especially by VINDICATING it from the pulpit with the utmost EARNESTNESS and PLAINNESS.

May it be your happiness, brethren of this church and society, my very dear friends, to find in your pastor such a defender of the faith; and may you and he rejoice in it together until the day of the Lord! Brethren, I cordially congratulate you on the prospects of the occasion. It has pleased the Lord to try you by vicissitude and apprehension, but he has brought you to see their end in light and hope. And it cannot but add to your satisfaction, in receiving your present pastor, to enjoy the hearty sympathy and receive the cordial God-speed of those who once stood among you in the same relation, and now are separated from you. They look back to those days when they lived among you and shared your life, with remembrances full of gratitude to God and to you. They bear thankful testimony to you in presence of the churches; and they commit to you this, our younger brother, assured that his labors will be kindly appreciated and his happiness affectionately guarded.

My young friend, I am sure that this people deserve, that they will respond to, that they will second, the best work you can do for them in this blessed cause; and they will be, I KNOW, as forbearing and tender, as a minister, conscious of infirmities and often needing forgiveness, can desire. Go among them, therefore, without fear. Give them your confidence and your strength. Labor for them and for God in a zealous and plain ministry; encouraged that they will be your reward here, and he your recompense in heaven.

A FAREWELL ADDRESS

TO THE

SECOND CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN BOSTON,

DELIVERED OCTOBER 4, 1830.

BRETHREN AND FRIENDS:

THE course of providence has brought us to the day in which I appear before you in the relation of your minister for the last time. I cannot suffer it to pass by and separate us without a parting word. The bond which has so happily connected us, was consecrated in this holy place with formal ceremony, and many words of religious solemnity. It ought not to be severed in silence. And I would make an unaccustomed effort, that these walls may once more resound with my voice, while I commune with you on the past, and utter the sentiments which belong to the present.

The bond between minister and people is near and peculiar. It ought not to be formed inconsiderately; it must not be broken rashly. Strong, deep, fervent affections are bound up with it; tender and intimate feelings surround and hallow it. When confirmed by time and intimacy, if it should be rudely ruptured, many hearts are torn; even when gently severed, many hearts bleed. *Our* separation

— blessed be He who in judgment always remembers mercy — is not sudden nor abrupt — is not the consequence of dissension, dissatisfaction, or division — has not been sought or desired on either side. It is the gradual result of circumstances, ordered not by man, but by an uncontrollable Providence, which arrested the minister in the midst of his labors, when he was engaged in them with more than usual satisfaction, and more than usual encouragement; — a providence, which, having withdrawn him from your service, presented to you, at once, a man on whom your hearts could rest, and provided for him another sphere of duty. We separate, therefore, in unbroken good-will; and commend each other to God as we part, not only from a sense of Christian duty, but with a warm sentiment of brotherly affection. It is a reason for devout gratitude to-day, that, with all the trials which have borne upon us, and introduced this event, we have been spared that bitterest of all — alienation and dissension.

It is impossible, on the arrival of a moment like this — when one scene of life closes, and one long period of accountableness is made up for judgment — not to look back and survey that period with anxious retrospection. In doing this, many reflections crowd upon the mind which may not be communicated to others; and some which it would be wrong not to utter. Of such I would speak briefly, as in the midst of friends who will not misunderstand me, nor require an apology for the egotism of the occasion.

If I were to mention all that I discern in the past, of error, negligence, unfaithfulness, on my own part, I should only unnecessarily pain you, and perhaps seem to be making an exhibition of humility. But some of you will understand me when I say, that I feel I need their forgiveness for instances of what must have seemed to them culpable

remissness; and I cannot be at ease, except by hoping that they have granted it. Indeed, no one, who has not experienced the difficulty of always doing all that is to be done in the complicated and trying walks of the pastoral office, can guess with what bitterness a minister is sometimes compelled to reproach himself, and how the kind approbation of his friends serves only to humble and rebuke him under a consciousness that he ill deserves it. For you — you have borne with my weakness, overlooked my neglects, been liberal to my necessities, candid to my faults. I can only thank you for that indulgence which has made my path pleasantness and peace; and beseech you to cheer the way of my successor with similar kindness.

Yet, whatever may have been my failure in executing the plan of my ministry, with the plan itself I perceive no reason to be dissatisfied. Being persuaded that the private duties of personal and pastoral intercourse are, at least, as important as the public exercises of the pulpit, and in fact necessary to their efficiency and success, it has been my wish and purpose to give much of my time and affections peculiarly to this sphere of action. If I have done any good, I attribute it almost entirely to the opportunities and power which I have in this way gained. That I have done no more, I feel now to be mainly owing to remissness, irresolution, and want of exact method in prosecuting this, the most difficult as well as important department of the minister's labors.

The same may be said in regard to the instruction of the children and youth of the congregation, — always an essential and favorite part of my plan, though pursued with so little systematic perseverance.

As regards the manner in which I have proposed to discharge the great function of preaching God's word, it has

simply been my endeavor to administer a suitable mixture of doctrinal instruction and moral exhortation; to state distinctly what seem to be the truths of revelation, accompanied always with expositions and illustrations from the Scriptures, and with explicit application to the characters and consciences of those who hear. I have wished to give you neither doctrinal discussions nor moral speculations in any other form than as drawn from the gospel of Jesus Christ, and singly designed to affect our hearts and lives. Undoubtedly I have failed of realizing my own standard; but I look back with shame to every instance in which I allowed any circumstances to lead me astray from this right and true path into a more showy but less profitable method.

If I thus survey with mixed feelings the conduct of my ministry, in a similar manner do I regard its *success*. In some respects it is grateful to me, in some respects it is sad. I think that I have seen, upon the whole, a general improvement in the religious condition of the congregation. Some individuals I have witnessed making noiseless, and steady, persevering progress in a religious character. Some I have seen reformed from worldliness and sin, and changed into conscientious followers of the Christian life. Some I have seen growing up from childhood to manhood, uniformly attached to the truth, and influenced by a regard to God. I have witnessed, in general, a punctual attendance on public worship, and have found encouragement from many who sought edification at more private religious exercises during the week. A larger proportion than formerly have been induced to profess their faith at the Lord's table; and if many still refrain without sufficient apology, I am willing at least to share the blame of their neglect; for if I had done my whole duty in regard to that ordinance, who can tell but they might have done theirs? Finally, in plans of general

good, and contributions for religious charity, I have never wanted countenance and aid; and though not among the wealthiest, I will not deny myself the pleasure of saying, that the Second Church has been among the readiest and most liberal of givers.

In these particulars I have expressed, and do express, my satisfaction — devoutly thankful to God that he appointed me to labor where my labors were seconded, and I could see that I did not toil wholly in vain.

Yet, friends and brethren, I should be false to you and to the truth, should I leave you with the pleasant impression that there is nothing to be rebuked, lamented, or improved among you. Alas! it cannot be so; and it will be a useful exercise for you also to look back impartially to-day, and awaken your consciences; for you are no less accountable than your minister for the connection which is now closing. I exhort you, therefore, as in the presence of Him who sees all hearts, and as those who must give account, to give one hour to consideration to-day. Ask yourselves how far you have been faithful to your privileges — how far you have used them diligently to promote your religious knowledge, and advance your Christian standing? Can you perceive that you are better men, more devout, benevolent, and thoughtful? Or have all these years, with their Sabbaths, prayers, and exhortations, passed over, and left you as you were? Alas! is it not to be feared that there are many among you who can answer these questions with little satisfaction? who have moved on year after year unimproved, and are going down to their graves as ignorant and imperfect as they were fourteen years ago? Will they not look at themselves now? Will they not heed a parting exhortation, though they have heard so many in vain? *To-*

day, at least, let them not harden their hearts. "For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" *

But there are others to whom I look with pleasure and congratulation. I have witnessed the growth of their faith, I have seen the advancement of their virtue, I have known their perseverance in good works. To them I say, Go on, and the Lord go with you in peace and strength. And yet, what I say unto all, I say also unto them — WATCH.

And now, brethren, my work among you is ended. Such as it has been, it is over. For you, and for me, the account is sealed up for a solemn judgment. The day is coming which will try it as with fire, and disclose to us its true character, with all its lasting consequences. Join me, brethren, in the prayer, that God will show mercy in that day!

Meantime, we are to finish our mortal probation apart. Yet I cannot feel that I shall be separated from you. This house will long seem to me my own religious home, and those who worship here, the members of my own religious household. Still, as returns the hallowed day, my spirit will come up among you, as it has done from across the ocean, and amid the worship of strange lands, to join in your praises, and bend with you at the mercy-seat. And when the day shall arrive that these temples have mouldered, and all earthly worship ceased, — when the scattered congregations of the saints shall assemble together with the church of the first-born in heaven, — then, too, it is my hope and prayer that we shall be found side by side in the worship of eternity, and accompany one another still in that

* These words were the text of Mr. Emerson's sermon preached just before the delivery of this Address.

career of infinite progress and spiritual glory which we commenced together here.

In this hope, I bid you — as your minister — farewell. I rejoice that I do not leave you alone, but to the guidance of able hands, and the instruction of faithful lips. God bestow upon your minister, and upon you, the choicest of spiritual blessings! May he lead, support, encourage, cheer, and save you! May the spirit of Christ dwell in you richly with all wisdom; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, abide among you, and sanctify you always!

ON THE

FORMATION

OF THE

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

ADDRESSED

TO THOSE WHO ARE SEEKING TO LEAD

A RELIGIOUS LIFE.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

In presenting to the religious public this little book,* the writer has only to say, that he undertook it because he thought that a work of this character was needed and would be welcome. During his active ministry, he had often felt the want of a book on personal religion, different, in some respects, from any which had fallen in his way; and when compelled by ill health to relinquish his pastoral cares, he attempted to beguile some of the languid hours of a weary convalescence by efforts at composing such a one. The result has come very far short of the idea which he had formed in his mind. The book was written at distant and uncertain intervals, upon journeys and in public houses, and has been now revised for the press in the midst of other cares, which have allowed no time for giving it the completeness he desired. Yet, as it belongs to a class of writings of whose importance he has the highest sense, and the multiplication of which, as well as the increase of a taste for their perusal, he esteems in the highest measure desirable, — he ventures to hope that this slight effort will not be wholly lost; and that it may at least do something towards exciting others to a preparation of more efficient works, which shall nourish the spirit of devotion, and extend the power of practical faith.

Cambridge, *May* 16, 1831.

* The "Christian Character" was originally published in a small volume.

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FORMATION

OF THE

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

INTRODUCTION.

AM anxious to bespeak the reader's right attention before enters on the following pages. They have been written r for those who are sincerely desirous of knowing themes, and are bent upon forming a religious character. ey can be of little interest or value to any other person, if read with any other view than that of self-improvet. I venture, therefore, to entreat every one, into ose hands the book may fall, to peruse it, as it has been tten, not for entertainment, but for moral edification; read it at those seasons when he is seriously disposed, can reflect upon the important topics presented to his r. I am solicitous to aid him in the formation of his istian character, and about every other result I am inerent.

would even presume, further, to warn one class of read- and that not a small one, against a danger which lurks a in their established respect for religion. That general ard for it, which grows out of the circumstances of eduon and the habits of society, may be mistaken for a re-

ligious state of mind; yet it is perfectly consistent with religious indifference. A man may sincerely honor, advocate, and uphold the religion of Christ on account of its general influence, its beneficial public tendency, its humane and civilizing consequences, without at all subjecting his own temper and life to its laws, or being in any proper sense a subject of the peculiar happiness it imparts. This is perhaps not an infrequent case. Men need to be made sensible that religion is a personal thing, a matter of personal application and experience. Unless it is so considered, it will scarcely be an object of earnest pursuit, or of fervent, hearty interest, nor can it exert its true and thorough influence on the character. Indeed, its desirable influence upon the state of society can be gained only through this deep personal devotion to it of individuals; because none but this is genuine religion, and the genuine only can exhibit the genuine power.

I know of nothing to be more earnestly desired, than that men should cease to look upon religion as designed for others, and should come to regard it as primarily affecting themselves; that they should first and most seriously study its relation to their own hearts, and be above all things anxious about their own characters. His is but a partial and unsatisfactory faith, which is concerned wholly with the state of society in general, and allows him to neglect the discipline of his own affections and the culture of his own spiritual nature. He is but poorly fitted to honor or promote the cause of Christ, who has not first subjected his own soul to his holy government. There are men enough, when Christianity is prevalent and honorable, to lend it their countenance and pay it external homage. We want more thorough, consistent exemplifications of its purity, benevolence, and spirituality. These can be found only in men,

who love it for its own sake, and because it is "the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation," and not simply because it is respectable in the eyes of the world, and favorable to the decency and order of the commonwealth. It is for those who are seeking this end, and for such only, that I write.

CHAPTER I.

THE NATURE OF RELIGION, AND WHAT WE ARE TO SEEK.

In order to the intelligent and successful pursuit of any object, it is necessary, first of all, to have a definite conception of what we desire to effect or obtain. This is especially important in the study of religion, both because of the extent and variety of the subject itself, and because of the very different apprehensions of men respecting it. Many are disheartened and fail, in consequence of setting out with wrong views and false expectations; from which cause religion itself suffers, being made answerable for failures which are entirely owing to the unreasonable anticipations and ill-directed efforts of those who enlisted in her service, but did not persevere in it.

Let us begin, then, with considering what is the object at which we aim when we seek a religious character.

Religion, in a general sense, is founded on man's relation and accountableness to his Maker; and it consists in cherishing the sentiments and performing the duties which thence result, and which belong to the other relations to other beings which God has appointed him to sustain.

Concerning these relations, sentiments, and duties, we are instructed in the Scriptures, especially in the New Testament. Religion, with us, is the *Christian* religion. It is found in the teachings and example of Jesus Christ. It consists in the worship, the sentiments, and the character, which he enjoined, and which he illustrated in his own person.

What you are to seek, therefore, is, under the guidance of Jesus Christ, to feel your relation to God, and to live under a sense of responsibility to him; to cultivate assiduously those sentiments and affections which spring out of this responsible and filial relation, as well as those which arise out of your connection with other men as his offspring; to perform all the duties to him and them, which appertain to this character and relation; and to cherish that heavenward tendency of mind, which should spring from a consciousness of possessing an immortal nature. He who does all this is a religious man, or, in other words, a Christian.

You desire to be a Christian. To this are requisite three things: belief in the truths which the gospel reveals; possession of the state of mind which it enjoins; and performance of the duties which it requires: or, I may say, the subjection of the mind by faith, the subjection of the heart by love, the subjection of the will by obedience. This universal submission of yourself to God is what you are to aim at. This is religion.

Observe how extensive a thing it is. It is a principle of the mind; founded upon thought, reflection, inquiry, argument; and leading to devotion and duty as most reasonable and suitable for intelligent beings.

It is a sentiment or affection of the heart; not the cold judgment of the intellect alone, in favor of what is right;

but a warm, glowing feeling of preference and desire; a feeling which attaches itself in love to the Father of all, and to all good beings; which turns duty into inclination, and pursues virtue from impulse; which prefers and delights in that which is well pleasing to God, and takes an affectionate interest in the things to which the Savior devoted himself.

It is a rule of life; it is the law of God; causing the external conduct to correspond to the principle which is established, and the sentiment which breathes, within; bringing every action into a conformity with the divine will, and making universal holiness the standard of the character.

The Scriptures represent religion under each of these different views. As a *principle*, it is called Faith; and in this view is faith extolled as the essential thing for life and salvation. We are to "walk by faith." We are "saved by faith." As a *sentiment*, it is styled Love. Love to God and man is declared by the Savior to be the substance of religion, and the apostles, especially John and Paul, every where represent this universal affection as the essence and the beauty of the Christian character. No one can read their language, and compare with it the life of Christ, without perceiving how essentially true religion is a sentiment of the heart. As a *law* or *rule*, it is spoken of throughout the Scriptures. It is a commandment of God, requiring obedience. We are "to do his will." Christ is the "author of salvation to those that obey him." "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." "He who keepeth my commandments, he it is that loveth me."

In the general complexion of Scripture, and in many particular passages, these several views are united: thus we are told that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,

long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance;" that the blessing of God belongs to the humble, penitent, meek, pure in heart, merciful, and peaceful; that the Christian character consists in "whatsoever is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report;" in adding to "faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity;" and "in denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly." *

You see, then, what is the character of the religion which you are seeking. You perceive that it implies the absolute supremacy of the soul and its interests over all the objects and interests of the present state; and that its primary characteristic is a certain state of mind and affections. It is not the external conduct, not the observance of the moral law alone, which constitutes a religious man; but the principles from which he acts, the motives by which he is governed, the state of his heart. A principle of spiritual life pervades his intellectual nature, gives a complexion to his whole temper, and is the spring of that moral worth, which is in other men the result of education, circumstances, or interest. He is actuated by a prevailing sense of God, and the desire of a growing resemblance to his moral image. He is possessed with the perpetual consciousness of his immortality, and is not ashamed to deny himself any of the gratifications of the present hour, when thereby he may keep his mind more disengaged for the study of truth and the contemplation of his highest good. Living thus with his chief sources of happiness *within* him, he bears with equanimity the changes and trials of earth, and tastes some-

* Gal. v. 22, 23; Matt. v. 3—9; Phil. iv. 8; 2 Pet. i. 6, 7; Tit. ii. 12.

thing of the peculiar felicity of heaven, which is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in a Holy Spirit;" and, like his Master, who sojourned below, but whose affections were above, he does his Father's will as he passes through the world, but has treasured up his supreme good in his Father's future presence.

But if you would discern the full excellence and loveliness of the religious life, do not rest satisfied with studying the law, or musing over the descriptions of it. Go to the perfect pattern, which has been set before the believer for his guidance and encouragement. Look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith. In him are exhibited all the virtues which you are to practise, all the affections and graces which you are to cultivate. In him is that rich assemblage of beautiful and attractive excellences, which has been the admiration of all reflecting men, the astonishment and eulogy of eloquent unbelievers, and the guide, consolation, and trust, of faithful disciples. In the dignity and sweetness which characterize him, how strongly do we feel that there is much more than a display of external qualities, conformity to a prescribed rule, and graceful propriety of outward demeanor! Nothing is more striking than the evident connection of every thing which he said and did with something internal. The sentiment and disposition which reign within are constantly visible through his exterior deportment; and we regard his words and his deeds less as distinct outward things, than as expressions or representations of character. As, in looking on certain countenances, we have no thought of color, feature, or form, but simply of the moral or intellectual qualities which they suggest, so, in contemplating the life of Jesus, we find ourselves perpetually looking beyond his mere actions, and fixing our thoughts on the qualities which they indicate. His life is

but the expressive countenance of his soul. We feel that, though in the midst of present things, he is led by principles, wrapped in thoughts, pervaded by sentiments, which are above earth, unearthly; that he is walking in communion with another sphere; and that the objects around him are matters of interest to him no further than as they afford materials for the exercise of his benevolence and opportunities for doing his Father's will.

This is the personification of religion. This is the model which you are to imitate. And it is when you shall be imbued with this spirit; when you shall be filled with this sentiment; when your words, actions, and life, shall be only the spontaneous expression of this state of mind, — it is then that you will have attained the religious character, and become spiritually the child of God. You will have built up the kingdom of God within you; its purity, its devotion, and its peace, will be shed abroad in your heart, and thence will display themselves in the manners and conduct of your life.

To attain and perfect this character is to be the object of your desire, and the business of your life. You must never lose sight of it. In all that you learn, think, feel, and do, you are to have reference to this end. Whatever tends to promote this, you are to cherish and favor. Whatever hinders this, or in any degree operates injuriously upon it, you are to discountenance and shun. All that gives bias to your passions and appetites, to your inclinations and thoughts, to your opinion of yourself, to your conduct toward others, your private or public employment of your time, your business and gains, your recreation and pleasures, is to be judged of by this standard, and condemned or approved accordingly. You are to feel that nothing is of such consequence to you as the Christian character; that to

form this is the very work for which you were sent into the world; that if this be not done, you do nothing, — you had better never have been born; for your life is wasted without effecting its object, and your soul enters eternity without having secured its salvation. The provisions of God's mercy are slighted, and for you the Savior has lived and died in vain.

It is plain, then, that the work to which you address yourself is arduous as well as delightful. It is not to be done in a short time, nor by a few indolent or violent efforts; not by an exercise of speculative reason, nor by an excitement of feeling, nor by assent to professions, forms, and rites; not by a love of hearing the word preached, nor by attention to the morals of ordinary life, nor by steadfastness in the virtues which are easy and pleasant; but only by a surrender of the whole man and the entire life to the will of God, in faith, affection, and action; by a thorough imitation of Jesus in the devout and humble temper of his mind, in the spirituality of his affections, and in the purity and loveliness of his conduct. Any thing less than this, any partial, external, superficial conformity to a rule of decent living or ritual observance, must be wholly insufficient. For it cannot mould and rule the character, cannot answer the claims of the Creator upon his creatures, cannot prepare for the happiness which Jesus has revealed; — a happiness so described, and so constituted, that none can be fitted for it, or be capable of enjoying it, but those who are earnestly and entirely conformed to the divine will. Who can relish the spiritual pleasures of eternity, that has not become spiritually minded? Who could enjoy admission to the society of Jesus, and the spirits of the just made perfect, that is not like them? Why should one hope for heaven,

and how expect to be happy there, if he have not formed a taste for its habits of purity, worship, and love?

Be on your guard, therefore, from the first, against setting your mark too low. Do not allow yourself to be persuaded that any thing less is religion, or will answer for you, than its complete and highest measure. Remember that these things must be "in you and abound." The higher you aim, the higher you will reach; but if content with a low aim, you will forever fall short. The scriptural word is *perfection.* Strive after that. Never be satisfied while short of it, and then you will be always improving. But if you set yourself some definite measure of goodness, if you prescribe to yourself some limit in devotion and love, you will by and by fancy you have reached it, and thus will remain stationary in a condition far below what you might have attained. Remember, always, that you are capable of being more devout, more charitable, more humble, more devoted and earnest in doing good, better acquainted with religious truth; and that, as it is impossible there should be any period to the progress of the human soul, so it is impossible that the endeavor of the soul should be too exalted. It is because men do not think of this, or do not practically apply it, that so many, even of those who intend to govern themselves by religious motives, remain so lamentably deficient in excellence. They adopt a low or a partial standard, and strive after it sluggishly, and thus come to a period in religion before they arrive at the close of life. Happy they who are so filled with longings after spiritual good, that they go on improving to the end of their days.

CHAPTER II.

OUR POWER TO OBTAIN THAT WHICH WE SEEK.

The account which has been given of religion in the preceding chapter shows it to be consonant to man's nature, and suited to the faculties with which God has endowed him. His soul is formed for religion, and the gospel has been adapted to the constitution of his soul. His understanding takes cognizance of its truths, his conscience applies them, his affections are capable of becoming interested in them, and his will of being subject to them. There can be no moment of existence, after he has come to the exercise of his rational faculties, at which this is not the case. As soon as he can love and obey his parents, he can love and obey God; and this is religion. The capacity of doing the one is the capacity of doing the other.

It is true, the latter is not so universally done as the former; but the cause is not, that religion is unsuited to the young, but that their attention is engrossed by visible objects and present pleasures. Occupied with these, it requires effort and painstaking to direct the mind to invisible things; to turn the attention from the objects which press them on every side, to the abstract, spiritual objects of faith. Hence it is easy to see that the want of early religion is owing, primarily, to the circumstances in which childhood is placed, and, next, to remissness in education. Worldly things are before the child's eye, and minister to its gratification every hour and every minute; but religious things are presented to it only in a formal and dry way once a week. The things of the world are made to constitute its pleasures; those of religion are made its tasks. It is made

to feel its dependence on a parent's love every hour; but is seldom reminded of its dependence on God, and then, perhaps, only in some stated lesson, which it learns by compulsion, and not in the midst of the actual engagements and pleasures of its little life. It partakes of the caresses of its human parents, and cannot remember the time when it was not an object of their tenderness; so that their image is interwoven with its very existence. But God it has never seen, and has seldom heard of him; his name and presence are banished from common conversation, and inferior and visible agents receive the gratitude for gifts which come from him. So also the parent's authority is immediate and visibly exercised, and obedience grows into the rule and habit of life. But the authority of God is not displayed in any sensible act or declaration; it is only heard of at set times and in set tasks; and thus it fails of becoming mingled with the principles of conduct, or forming a rule and habit of subjection. In a word, let it be considered how little and how infrequently the idea of God is brought home to the child's mind, even under the most favorable circumstances, and how little is done to make him the object of love and obedience, in comparison with what is done to unite its affections to its parents; while, at the same time, the spirituality and invisibility of the Creator render it necessary that even more should be done; and it will be seen that the want of an early and spontaneous growth of the religious character is not owing to the want of original capacity for religion, but is to be traced to the unpropitious circumstances in which childhood is passed, and the want of uniform, earnest, persevering instruction.

I have made this statement for two reasons. First, because I think it points out the immense importance of a religious education, and is an urgent call upon parents for

greater diligence in this duty. No parent will deliberately say, in excuse for his neglect, that his children are incapable of apprehending and performing their duty to God. He will perceive that the same operation of circumstances and of unceasing influences, which has made them devoted to him, would make them devoted to God; and religion is that state of mind toward God which a good child exercises toward a parent. It is the same principle and the same affections, fixing themselves on an infinitely higher object. Let parents be aware of this, and they will feel the call and the encouragement to a more systematic and affectionate attention to the religious instruction of their children.

I have made this statement, moreover, because it offers a guide to those who have passed through childhood without permanent religious impressions, and are now desirous of attaining them. It is principally for such that I write. They may be divided into many classes; some more and some less distant from the kingdom of God; some profligate, some indifferent; some with much goodness of outward performance, but with no internal principle of faith and piety; and some without even external conformity to right. But however differing in their past course of life, and in the peculiar habits and dispositions which characterize them, in one thing they now agree, — they are sensible of their errors and sins, and desire to apply themselves to that true and living way, which shall lead them to the favor of God and everlasting life. They feel that there is a great work to be done, a great change to be effected, either internally or externally, or both, and they are desirous to learn in what manner it shall be accomplished.

To such persons the statement which I have made above may be useful. Let them look back to it, and reflect upon

it. God has given them powers for doing the work which he has assigned to them. That work is expressed in one word — the comprehensive name *Religion*. That work they should have begun and perseveringly pursued from their earliest days. But they have done otherwise. They have wandered from duty, and been unfaithful to God. They have gone far from him, like the unwise prodigal, and wasted the portion he gave them in vicious or unprofitable pursuits. They have cultivated the animal life; they have lived "according to the flesh." They need to cultivate the spiritual life; to live "according to the Spirit." There is an animal life, and there is a spiritual life. Man is born into the first at the birth of his body; he is born into the second when he subjects himself to the power of religion, and prefers his rational and immortal to his sensual nature. During his earliest days, he is an animal only, pursuing, like other animals, the wants and desires of his body, and consulting his present gratification and immediate interest. But it is not designed that he shall continue thus. He is made for something better and higher. He has a nobler nature and nobler interests. He must learn to live for these; and this learning to feel and value his spiritual nature, and to live for eternity — this change from the animal and earthly existence of infancy to a rational, moral, spiritual existence, — this is to be born into the spiritual life. This is a renovation of principle and purpose through which every one must pass. Every one must thus turn from his natural devotion to things earthly to a devotion to things heavenly. This change it is the object of the gospel to effect; and we seek no less than this, when we seek the influence of the gospel on our souls.

Now, the persons of whom I am speaking have not yet acquired this new taste and principle. It has made, with

them, no part of the process of education. It is yet to be acquired. They are desirous of acquiring it. Let them first be persuaded of its absolute *necessity*. Until this is felt, nothing can be effectually done. Without it, there will be no such strenuous effort for religious attainment as is necessary to success. Many persons have at times, some have frequently, a certain conviction upon their minds, that they are not passing their lives as they ought, and they make half a resolution to do differently. They are ill-content with their condition; they long to be free from the reproaches of conscience; they wish to be assured that their souls are safe. But, although uneasy and dissatisfied, they take no steps toward improving their condition, because they have no proper persuasion of its absolute necessity. They must be deeply convinced of this. They must strongly feel that a state of indifference is a state of danger; that they are on the brink of ruin, so long as they are alienated from God, and governed by passion, appetite, and inclination, rather than a sense of duty. And such is the power of habit, that they in vain hope to be delivered from its bondage, and to become consistent followers of Christ, unless a strong feeling shall lead them to make a resolute, energetic effort. If they allow themselves to fancy that it will be time enough by and by; that, after all, the case is not very desperate, but can be remedied at any time; and that it would be a pity yet to abandon their pleasant vices — then there is no hope for them. They are cherishing the most dangerous of all states of mind — a state which prevents all real desire for improvement, is continually weakening their power of change, and absolutely destroys the prospect of amendment. They must begin the remedy by a persuasion of its necessity. They must feel it so strongly, that they cannot rest content without immediately subjecting

themselves to the dominion of religion, — as a starving man feels the necessity of immediately applying to the search for food. No man will give himself to the thoughts, studies, devotions, and charities, of a religious life, who does not find them essential to the satisfaction and peace of his mind; that is, who is satisfied without them. Cherish, therefore, the conviction of this necessity. Cultivate by every possible means a deep persuasion of the truth, that the service and love of God are the only sufficient sources of happiness; and that only pain and shame can await him who withholds his soul from the light and purity for which it was made.

Feeling thus the importance of a religious life, let them next be persuaded that its attainment is entirely in their power. It is but to use the faculties which God has given them, in the work and with the aid which God has appointed. No one will venture to say that he is incapable of this. A religious life, as we have seen, grows out of the relations in which man stands to God and his fellow-men; and as he is made accountable for the performance of the duties of these relations, it is impossible that he is not created capable of performing them. It were as reasonable to urge that a child cannot love and obey its father and mother, as that a man cannot love and obey God.

Yet it so happens, that some profess to be deterred from a religious course by the apprehension that it is not in their power; it is something which it must be given them to do; a work which must be wrought in them by a supernatural energy; they must wait till their time has come. But every apology for irreligion, founded on reasons like this, is evidently deceptive. It proceeds upon wrong notions respecting the divine aid imparted to man. That this aid is needed, and is given in the Christian life, is a true and comforting doctrine. But that it is to supersede human exertion, that it

is a reason for indolence and religious neglect, is a false and pernicious notion, — countenanced, I will venture to affirm, by no one whose opinion or example is honored or followed in the Christian church. On the contrary, all agree in declaring, with the apostle, that, while "God works in us to will and to do," we are to "work out our own salvation;" and to do it with "fear and trembling," because, after all, these divine influences will be vain without our own diligence.

In some persons, this notion takes the form of a real or fancied humility. They fear lest they be found seeking salvation through their own works, and relying on their own merits. But what a strange humility this, which leads to a disregard of the divine will, and disobedience to the divine commands; which virtually says, "I will continue in sin, that grace may abound"! Let me ask, too, Who will trust to receive salvation without actual obedience? Where is it promised to those who will do nothing in the way of self-government and active virtue? Where is it offered to any, but those who seek it by "bringing forth fruits meet for repentance," and by "patient continuance in well-doing"?

And let none fear lest this make void the grace of God. For how is it that grace leads to salvation? Is it by arbitrarily fitting the soul for it, and ushering it into heaven without its own coöperation? Or is it not rather by opening a free highway to the kingdom of life, through which all may walk and be saved? This is what the Savior has done; he has made the path of life accessible and plain, has thrown open the gate of heaven, has taught men how to enter in and reach their bliss. Whoever pursues this path, and enters "through the gate into the city," is saved by grace. For though he has used his own powers to travel on this highway, yet he did not establish that highway; nor

could he have traversed it without guidance and aid; nor could he have opened for himself the door of entrance. Heaven is still a free gift, inasmuch as it is granted by infinite benignity to those who did not, do not, and cannot deserve it. Yet there are certain conditions to be performed; and to refuse the performance of those conditions, on the plea that you thus derogate from the mercy of God, and do something to purchase or merit happiness, is a madness which ought to be strenuously opposed, or it will leave you to perish in your sins.

These two things, then, may be regarded as axioms of the religious life; first, that a man's own labors are essential to his salvation; second, that his utmost virtue does nothing toward purchasing or meriting salvation. When he has done all his duty, he is still, as the Savior declares, but an "unprofitable servant." He has been more than recompensed by the blessings of this present life. That the happiness of an eternal state may be attained, in addition to these, is a provision of pure grace; and it is mere insanity to neglect the duties of religion through any fear lest you should seem to be seeking heaven on the ground of your own desert. Virtue would be your duty, though you were to perish forever at the grave; and that God has opened to his children the prospect of a future inheritance infinitely disproportioned to their merit, is only a further reason for making virtue your first and chief pursuit.

It is true, there is great infirmity in human nature; and you will find yourself perplexed and harassed by temptations from without and within. Passion, appetite, pleasure, and care, solicit and urge you, and render it not easy to keep yourself unspotted from the world. But what then? Does this excuse the want of exertion? Is this a good reason for sitting idly with folded arms, and saying, It is all vain;

I am wretchedly weak; I cannot undertake this work till God gives me strength? Believe me, there is no humility in this. Think of yourself and of your deserts as humbly as you please; but to think so meanly of the powers God has given you, as to deem them insufficient for the work he has assigned you, is less humility than ingratitude and want of faith. Nothing is truer than this, — that your work is proportioned to your powers, and your trials to your strength. "No temptation hath taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Here is the manifestation of peculiar grace; when a sincere and humble spirit, in its earnest search for the true way, encounters obstacles, hardships, and opposition, at this moment it is that aid from on high is interposed. The promise to Paul is fulfilled, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities." Let it be, then, that human nature is weak; no work is appointed greater than its power, and it "can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth."

Be thoroughly persuaded, therefore, that the work before you is wholly within your power. Nothing has a more palsying effect on one's exertions in any enterprise, than the doubt whether he be equal to it. Something like confidence is necessary to enable him to pursue it vigorously and perseveringly. It is as necessary in action as the apostle represents it to be in prayer. "He that wavereth or doubteth is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed." But when he has confidence, as the Christian may have, that his strength is equal to his task, that he cannot fail if he resolutely go forward, and that all hinderances must disappear before a steady and industrious zeal,

which leans upon God, and is strong in the power of the Lord, then he presses on with alacrity, encounters trials without alarm, and is "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; knowing that his labor is not in vain in the Lord;" for that nothing but his own fault can bar him out of heaven, or cause him to fail of eternal life.

And all this is perfectly consistent with the deepest humility, and the profoundest sense of dependence on God.

CHAPTER III.

THE STATE OF MIND IN WHICH THE INQUIRER SHOULD SUSTAIN HIMSELF.

All this, I say, is perfectly consistent with the deepest humility and most unassuming dependence upon God. If it were not, it would be false and wrong; for an humble and dependent disposition is a prime requisite in the Christian — a grace to be especially cultivated at the beginning of the religious course. It is concerning this state of mind that we are now to speak.

Deep religious impressions are always accompanied by a sense of personal unworthiness, and not unfrequently commence with it. It is man's acquaintance with himself, which leads him most earnestly to seek the acquaintance of God, and to perceive the need of his favor. The sense of sin; the feeling that his life has not been right; that his heart is not pure; that his thoughts, dispositions, appetites, passions, have not been duly regulated; that he has lived

according to his own will, and not that of God; that, if taken from his worldly possessions, he has no other object of desire and affection to which his heart could cling; if called to judgment for the use of his powers and privileges, he must be speechless and hopeless; — all this rises solemnly to his mind, and sinks him low under a sense of ill desert and shame. He sees that he might have been, ought to have been, better; that he might have been, ought to have been, obedient to God, and a follower of all that is good. He cannot excuse himself to himself. Every effort to palliate his guilt only shows him its aggravation; and he cries out, with the penitent prodigal, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." He has offended against knowledge and opportunity, and in spite of instruction and warning. He looks back to the early and innocent days, when, if his Savior had been on earth, he might have taken him to his arms, and said, "Of such is the kingdom of God." But, alas! how has he been changed! He has parted with that innocence, he has strayed from the kingdom of heaven, he has defiled and lost the image of his Maker. While he dwells on this thought of what he was, and what he might have become, and contrasts it with what he is, he is filled with remorse. He exaggerates to himself all his failings; paints, in blacker colors than even the truth all his iniquities; counts himself the chief of sinners; and is almost ready to despair of mercy.

When the mind is strongly agitated in this way, it is surprising how the characters of very different men become, as it were, equalized. Of many individuals, differing in the most various ways as regards the number and nature, the magnitude and circumstances, of their offences, and most widely separated in the actual scale of demerit, each, at such

a season, regards himself as the most guilty of men. Sometimes the high-wrought expressions, in which the victim of remorse vents the excruciating anguish of his mind, are accounted affectation and hypocrisy. But there can be no good reason to doubt that they are entirely sincere. The man honestly describes himself as he seems to himself at the time. He *is*, in his own eyes, the wretch he draws. And this is very easily explained. He sees, at one view, all his past sins, open and secret; his thoughtlessness, ingratitude, negligence, and omissions; his depraved inclinations, evil desires, and cherished lusts; which no one else knows, and which no one else could compare, as he can, with his privileges and obligations. All these he sets by the side, not of the hidden and private life of others, but of their decent public demeanor. He compares them, too, not with the standard of worldly, outward morality, but with the strict, searching, holy requisitions of the law of God. And in such a comparison, at such a moment, he cannot but regard himself as most unworthy and depraved.

And we need not be too anxious at once to correct this feeling. The abasement is well; for no one can feel guilt too strongly, or abhor sin too deeply. The time will come when he will learn to follow the direction of the apostle, and "think of himself soberly, as he ought to think." But at this first fair inspection of the deformities of his character, it is not to be expected that he should make his estimate with perfect sobriety. Only let every thing be done to guide, and soothe, and encourage him, and nothing to exasperate his self-condemnation, or drive him to insanity or despair.

But such a state of mind as I have described, though not uncommon, and by many cherished as the most desirable and suitable at the commencement of the religious life, is

by no means universal at that period, and cannot be regarded as essential. The experience of different individuals in this respect greatly varies, and is much affected by temper and disposition, as well as by other circumstances. Many excellent Christians have never been subjected to those violent and torturing emotions, which have shaken and convulsed others. Their course has been placid and serene, though solemn and humble. They have felt their sin, and have mourned beneath it, and in deep humiliation have sought its forgiveness; but without any thing of terrified emotion or gloomy despondency. They have been gently won to truth by the mild invitations of parental love, without needing the fearful denunciations of punishment and wrath to awaken them. This difference among individuals is owing partly, as I said, to constitutional difference of temperament, which renders it impossible that the same representations should affect all alike; and partly to the different modes in which religion is presented to different minds; having first appeared to some in its harsher features, as to the Jews on Sinai, and to others in the milder form of a Savior's compassion. But, however this may be, and however the humiliation of one may wear a different complexion from that of another, it is a state of mind sincere and heartfelt in all, to be studiously cherished, and to be made permanent in the character.

In the beginning of the Christian life, this feeling assumes the form of anxiety, as it afterward leads to watchfulness. This word may, perhaps as well as any, describe the state of those for whom I am writing. They are *anxious* about themselves, about their characters, their condition, their prospects. They are anxious to know what they shall do to be saved, and to gain satisfactory assurance that they shall be pardoned and accepted of God. This is a most reason-

able solicitude. What can be more reasonable than such a solicitude for the greatest and most lasting good of man? What more becoming a rational creature, whose eternal welfare is dependent on his own choice between good and evil, than this desire to know and pursue the right? this earnest thoughtfulness respecting his condition? and this inquiry for the true end of his being? If a person, hitherto thoughtless, is in this state of mind, he is to be congratulated upon it. We are to be thankful to God in his behalf, that another immortal soul is awake to its responsibility, and seeking real happiness. We would urge him to cherish the feelings which possess him; not with melancholy despondency; not with superstitious gloom; not with unmanly and unmeaning debasement; but with thoughtful, self-distrusting concern, with deliberate study for the path of duty, and a resolute purpose not to swerve from it.

Remember that much depends, I might say every thing depends, on the use you make of this your present disposition. Be faithful to it, obey its promptings, let it form in you the habit of devout reflection and religious action, and all must be well. The issue will be the Christian character, and the soul's salvation. But refuse to cherish this disposition, drive it from you, smother and silence it, and you will probably do yourself an everlasting injury. It is like putting out a fire which has just been lighted, and which may with difficulty be kindled again. It is trifling with the sensibility of conscience, it is bringing hardness upon your heart; and there is less prospect that you will afterward arrive at an habitual and controlling regard for your religious interests. This it is to "quench the Spirit."

Be sensible, therefore, that this is a critical moment in the history of your character; that it is in many respects the decisive point at which your destiny is to be determined.

For now it is, in all probability, that the bias of your mind is to be determined for good or evil. Be sensible, then, how necessary it is that you keep alive, and cultivate by all possible means, this tenderness of heart. Avoid every pursuit, engagement, and company, which you find to be inconsistent with it, or unfavorable to it, or tending to destroy it. Scenes at other times innocent should now be shunned, if they operate to turn the current of your affections; for you are engaging in a great work, *the giving your heart a permanent bias toward God*, and it ought not to be interrupted. While this is doing, you can well afford to withdraw from many scenes you might otherwise frequent; and, indeed, you can ill afford the risk of exposing yourself to their influence.

It may be well to observe another caution. Say nothing of your thoughts and feelings to any, but one or two confidential friends. Many a religious character has been spoiled in the forming, by too much talk with too many persons. The best religious character is formed in retirement, by much silent reflection, and private reading and prayer. What the soul needs above all things, is to commune with itself and with God; then it is established, strengthened, settled. But if a man go out from his closet, and seek for instruction and guidance by talking with all who will talk with him, he fritters away his feelings; his frame becomes less deeply and essentially spiritual; words take the place of sentiment; and he is very likely to become a talkative, fluent, superficial religionist, with much show of sound doctrine, and a goodly readiness of sound speech, but without substantial principle. Shun, therefore, rather than seek, much communication with many persons. But some counsel and encouragement you may need. Apply, therefore, to your minister. He is your legitimate and true

counsellor, and he will be glad, in friendly and confidential intercourse, to lead you on. You may have also some pious friend, to whom, possibly, you may unbosom yourself more freely than you have courage to do to your minister; and he may, in some particulars, give you aid, which the situation of the pastor may put it out of his power to afford. In this manner, feel your way along quietly, silently, steadily. Let the growth within you be like that of the grain of wheat, which germinates in secret, and springs up without observation, and attracts little notice of men, till it shows "the ear and the full corn in the ear." Be anxious to establish yourself firmly in the power of godliness, before you exhibit its form.

In connection with this, it may be well to add a caution on a kindred point. Do not spend too much time in public meetings. You will, of course, be desirous to hear the preaching of the gospel. You feel as if you could not hear it too often or too much. You wonder that preaching should never before have seemed so interesting. You listen with unstopped ears; and prayers, hymns, and sermons, fall upon your spirit as if you had been gifted with a new sense. It is well that it is so. By all means cherish this ardent interest in public worship. But do not indulge it to excess. Let your moderation be seen in giving to this its proper place and importance in your time and regard. It is not the only religious enjoyment or means of improvement in your power; and it may possibly be mere self-indulgence which carries one from meeting to meeting. Remember that no duty towards others is to be neglected in the search for personal improvement: this would be sin. And it is at times a higher duty to attend to your family, to be with your friends, to instruct your children, to consult the feelings and yield to the prejudices of a husband or wife, a parent,

brother, or sister, than it is to pursue your own single advantage, it may be your own gratification, by going out to social worship. And if it be your object to please God or discipline your own spirit, you will better effect that object by this exercise of self-denial, than by doing what would give uneasiness to others, and perhaps even alienate them from you, and render them hostile to religion itself. The advice of the apostle to wives is in force on this point, and is equally applicable to the other social relations: "Ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they may, without the word, be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear."

Be warned, therefore, against this error. And what are you to lose by the course which I recommend? Believe me, however much may be gained by the sympathy and excitement of a public assembly, quite as much is gained by the sacrifice of your inclinations to duty and to the feelings of others, and by the silent, unwitnessed exercises of retirement, which no one can forbid you. Look not at the present moment, but at the end. Your desire is to form a genuine, solid, thorough, permanent character of devotion. Well; try to form it wholly in the excitement, and beneath the external influence, of public meetings, and it will be such a character as can exist only in such scenes. Your piety will always need the presence and voice of men to keep it alive, and, unsustained by them, will sink away and die. This, at least, is the danger to be apprehended; and experience declares that it is no slight one. But form your character in private, build it up by the action of your own mind, under the direction of the Bible, and by intercourse with the Father of spirits, — and then it will always be independent of other men and of outward circumstances. It will be

self-sustained on a foundation which man and earth cannot shake, alike powerful in the solitude and in the crowd, and immovable in steadfastness, though all other men prove false, and faith have fled all other bosoms. It is such a piety that belongs to the Christian; it is such that you are to seek; and you may well be apprehensive of failure, if you neglect this salutary caution.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MEANS OF RELIGIOUS IMPROVEMENT.

The means to be used in order to render permanent your religious impressions, and promote the growth of your character, are now to be considered. They may be arranged under the following heads: — Reading, Meditation, Prayer, Hearing the Word preached, and the Lord's Supper.

I. Reading.

I begin with the more private means; and I speak of reading first, because it is in the perusal of the Scriptures that the beginning of religious knowledge is to be found. It is they which testify of Christ, and have the words of eternal life. It is they which make wise unto salvation. And it is through a devout acquaintance with them, that the mind and heart grow in the knowledge and love of God, and that the dispositions are formed which prepare for heaven. Every one may read the Bible; and, such is its plainness and simplicity in all matters pertaining to life and godliness, that if he be able to read nothing else, he may yet learn all that is

essential to duty and acceptance. Hence it has happened, that many, to whom circumstances have interdicted all general acquaintance with books, have gathered, from their solitary study of the Bible alone, a wisdom which has expanded and elevated their minds, and a peace which has raised them above the darkness and trials of an unhappy worldly lot.

There are those whose condition in life is such that they have very little time or means to devote to books; and it were vain to recommend to them that they should seek instruction beyond the sacred pages, and the simplest elementary works of devotion. While, therefore, it is the undoubted duty of every one to make the utmost possible progress in religious knowledge, no one is to be condemned for that omission of study and ignorance of books which are rendered unavoidable by circumstances. We must make a distinction, it has been truly said, between that which is the duty of all, and may be done by all, — that is, a careful and devout perusal of the Scriptures, — and that which is the duty, because within the ability, only of a more limited number, — the study of other sources of knowledge and virtue. These every one must pursue in proportion to his leisure and means.

The class of those who have the leisure and means is large and numerous; it is to be wished that they were more alive to their obligation to improve themselves accordingly. I know not how it happens that serious and devout persons are so content to be ignorant on those great topics which they truly feel to transcend all others in importance. It certainly deserves their consideration, whether this indifference be either creditable or right. Capacity and opportunity form the measure of duty; and if they have received the power and means of cultivating their minds and adding

to their treasures of truth and thought, they should regard it as an intimation that this is required of them. They should not esteem it enough to be sincere and conscientious; they should desire to be well-informed; well-informed respecting the interpretation of the more difficult and curious portions of holy writ, respecting the history and transmission of the records of their faith, the fortunes of the church in successive ages, the effects of their religion and of other religions on the world, the past and present state of religious opinions, the past and present operations of Christian benevolence, the means of doing good, and the lives, labors, and speculations of the eminent professors of their faith. Now, all this is to be known only through books; and in order to attain it, a judicious selection of books, and an appropriation of certain seasons for reading, are primarily requisite. The bare importance and interest of these subjects ought to be a sufficient inducement to the adoption of this course.

There are many other considerations which render it worthy of attention. The preaching of divine truth becomes far more profitable to those who have prepared themselves for it by the information thus acquired. Words are used in the pulpit, modes of speech occur, allusions are made, and facts and reasonings referred to, which presuppose an acquaintance with certain subjects, and which are entirely lost to those who never read. The better a hearer is furnished with preliminary knowledge, the greater pleasure will he derive from the pulpit; because the better will he understand and appreciate the sentiments expressed. At present, such is the uninformed character of a large portion of ordinary congregations, that a minister is compelled to pass by many modes of illustration, and many representations of truth and duty, because they would be, to a great

majority unintelligible, and therefore unprofitable. Instead of going on to perfection in the proclamation of higher and wider views, he is compelled, as the apostle complained in a similar case, to confine himself "to the first principles of the oracles of God." Some teachers, unwilling or unable thus to adapt themselves to the actual stature of their hearers' minds, pursue their own modes of thought and expression, without regard to their audience; and, while they gratify a few reading and thinking men, leave the mass of the people uninstructed and unaffected. Herein is a sad error. But if the preacher must adapt himself to the hearers, the hearers ought to prepare themselves for the preaching. This is to be done by greater familiarity with religious books. They would then be ready for higher and more extensive themes, and for a wider scope of illustration, while the preacher would cease to feel himself fettered. At present, warmed and filled, as his mind must often be, by large contemplation and exalted study, he sometimes unconsciously speaks that which is an unknown tongue to the unlettered man, though delightful and wholesome to him whose habits of reading have prepared him to receive it.

Further still. It might do for mere men of the world, who professedly seek only worldly good, and hold of little worth the goods of the mind, — it might do for *them* to neglect books and thinking, and spend all their precious leisure in idle recreations. They are living for the body. But it is the distinction of the Christian, that he lives for the soul, for his intellectual and moral nature, for that part of him which is noblest now, and which alone shall live forever. He has passed out of the animal into the spiritual life. It is not for him to omit or neglect any suitable means of intellectual or moral cultivation. He is guilty of criminal inconsistency, he is a traitor to his own mind, if he refuse

to nourish it, systematically, with knowledge and truth. To keep it inactive and ignorant, is to keep it degraded. Jesus lived and died for it, that it might attain the truth, and that the truth might make it *free*. But what is the freedom of the mind bound in the fetters of ignorance? Freedom and elevation can come to it only through knowledge, and one chief fountain of knowledge is books. These inform and excite it, and furnish food for thought. Thought is exercise; it is to the mind what motion is to the body. Without it, there is neither health nor strength. And when God has graciously ordered that your lot should be cast amid the abundance of books, where you need only put forth your hand and be supplied; when he thus makes easy to you that intellectual and moral attainment which is the soul's dignity and happiness; I see not how you can answer it to your conscience, if you do not sacredly devote to this object a certain portion of your leisure.

In regard to the quantity of time to be thus employed, no uniform rule can be given. Men vary so much in occupation, opportunity, and leisure, that, while one may easily command hours, another can with difficulty secure minutes. On this point every one must be left to the decision of his own conscience. Inquire of that, impartially and seriously, and then determine how large a portion of time you can daily give to this great object. I believe it may be laid down as certain, that most persons may afford to it a great deal more than they imagine. Some make no effort to do any thing, because they can effect so little that they account it not worth the effort. But they should remember that duty does not consist in doing great things, but in doing what we can; and that, if they would redeem from the hurry of business and the relaxation of sleep one quarter of an hour a day, it would be a more praiseworthy offering than

the many hours which are given by others. Even five minutes a day would be worth something, would be invaluable to one who was earnestly bent on using it. It would amount in a year to about thirty hours; and who will say that it is not better to improve the mind for thirty hours than not at all? But I am persuaded that there is scarcely any one, however engrossed in necessary cares, who may not find much more time than this — who may not find an hour a day. By greater care of the minutes which he wastes, by abridging a little from his meals, a little from his pleasures, and a little from his sleep, it would be easily accomplished. If one be in earnest, as he should be, if he seek for wisdom as for gold, and for understanding as for hid treasure, it will be no impossible thing to find the requisite time. Few men but could readily gain an hour a day, if they were to gain by it a dollar a day. Indeed, it is often seen, in actual life, that a person to whom religion has become an object of deep concern, contrives to devote to his books more time than this, though before he would have thought it impossible. Nothing is wanting but the "willing mind." If one feel the necessity, every thing else will give way. Rather than remain ignorant and without progress in the truth, he will cheerfully watch an hour later at night, and rise an hour earlier in the morning. The gain to the mind will more than balance the inconvenience to the body.

You may regard it, then, as some proof of the sincerity and earnestness of your desire for improvement, if you find yourself able to appropriate a certain portion of time to profitable reading. It is important that you select for this purpose those hours which shall be least liable to interruption, and that you allow nothing to infringe upon them.

Keep this as holy time. Be punctual and faithful to it, as the banker to his hours of business.

There are seasons in every one's vocation, at which his business is less pressing than at others; and there are also seasons of leisure, which he feels at liberty to take for recreation and amusement. As you will have lost all taste for frivolous amusement and unprofitable pleasures, you will be able to devote all such seasons to the improvement of your mind; and, instead of the theatre and the ball-room, from which you would have returned fatigued in body and distracted in mind, and to some extent unfitted for duty, you will enjoy the converse of the great minds which have blessed the world, and, after filling your soul with their thoughts, will go back to your ordinary duty with a spirit refreshed and invigorated, and a body unwearied. During the season of long evenings, especially when so many are hurrying from diversion to diversion, as if this long leisure were provided them only that they may contrive how ingeniously they can throw it away, — you will perceive that you have a most favorable opportunity for pursuing extensive researches, and making large acquisitions of knowledge. Evening after evening, in your own quiet retirement, you will sit down to this instructive application. By this diligence what progress may you make! what volumes may you master! to what extent may you penetrate the secrets of science, acquire a knowledge of history and of letters, and become enriched with those great and various treasures of intellect, which are subservient to the growth of the mind and the glory of God! You will thus be using time for the purpose for which it was given, — the ripening and perfecting of your immortal mind; and at all intervals of release from duty to others, will make it your happiness to be thus performing a great duty to yourself.

In your selection of books, the Bible will, of course, hold the first place. This is to be read daily, and to be your favorite book. Remember, however, that it may be perused in such a manner that it were better never to have opened it. If studied inattentively, for form's sake, or only for the purpose of gathering arguments to support your opinions, it is read irreligiously, and therefore unprofitably. You must habitually regard it as uttering instructions with a voice of authority, of which you are earnestly to seek the true meaning, and then submissively to obey them. You must never forget that your hopes of right instruction are suspended on the simplicity and fidelity with which you receive those holy words; and as they were written expressly to make you wise unto salvation, no inferior purpose must distract your attention from this.

You will, therefore, always have in view two objects — to understand the book, and to apply it to your own heart and character.

The study of the Bible, for the purpose of understanding it, is an arduous labor. Dr. Johnson said of the New Testament, "It is the most difficult book in the world, for which the labor of a life is required." No book requires greater and more various aid. Its thorough interpretation is a science by itself; and you must ask of those, in whose judgment you confide, to point out the requisite helps for this interesting investigation; to enable you to reach the pure text, and arrive at the meaning of every passage as it lay in the mind of the writer. Recollect that a passage standing by itself may bear a very good meaning, which yet was not the meaning designed; and make it a sacred rule, not to receive or quote it in any other sense than that which belongs to it in its original place. The neglect of this rule has occasioned much misinterpretation and misapplication

of Scripture; and some passages have come to be familiarly understood and cited in senses altogether foreign from their proper import. This is a perversion; and it is an immense evil to have wrong ideas thus fastened upon the language of the sacred writers.

And be not afraid of examining the text scrupulously, and employing the utmost energy of your mind in discovering and determining its true sense. It is a duty to do this. You can decide between opposing and possible interpretations only by applying your own mind to judge between them; and the more keenly, impartially, and fearlessly, you proceed, the greater the probability that your decision will be correct. On this point some persons greatly err. They seize on the first meaning which presents itself to their minds, or has been presented by another, and resolutely abide by it; they refuse to investigate further, lest they should be guilty of irreverently trying the divine word by their own fallible reason. Indulge no such weakness as this. Never, indeed, be guilty for a moment of the insane folly and sin of disputing the authority of revelation, or setting up your reason as a superior light and safer guide. But in deciding upon the meaning of Scripture, you cannot use your intellectual powers too much or too acutely. Use them constantly, coolly, impartially, with the best aid you can obtain from human authors, and then you may rest satisfied that you have done your duty, — have done all which you could do toward learning the truth; and if you have accompanied it with prayer for a blessing from the Source of truth and wisdom, you cannot have failed, in any essential point, to ascertain the will of God.

But there is another object, — the application of Scripture to the forming of the heart and character. This is a higher object than the other, and may be effected in cases

where very little of rigid scrutiny can be made into the dark places of the divine word. Blessed be God, it is not necessary, in order to salvation, that one should comprehend all the things hard to be understood, or be able to follow out the train of reasoning in every epistle, and restore the text in every corruption. Do all this as much as you can. But when you read, as it were for your life; when you take the Bible to your closet, to be the help and the solitary witness of your prayers; when you take it up as a lamp which you are to hold to your heart, for the purpose of searching into its true state, that you may purify and perfect it; — then put from your mind all thoughts of differing interpretations and various readings, and the perplexities of criticism and translation. You have only to do with what is spiritual and practical. You are no more a scholar, seeking for intellectual guidance, but a sinful and accountable creature, asking for help in duty, and deliverance from an evil world and an evil heart. Read, therefore, as if on your knees. Make your heart feel and respond to every sentiment. Apply to yourself with rigor every precept and warning; and according to the character of the passage, let your mind glow with fervor, and be uplifted in holy adoration and devout gratitude, or be thrilled and humbled by the representations of infinite purity and justice, or melted and borne away by the tones of tender love and long-suffering grace. Suffer yourself to read nothing coldly, when you read for spiritual improvement. You might as lawfully pray coldly. Therefore let your reading be like your prayers, — done with all your heart. And be sensible that it is better to go over one short passage many times, till you fully grasp its sentiment, and grow warm with it, than to run over hastily and unfeelingly many chapters.

You are not to suppose, from what has been said, that

you are altogether to separate these two modes of reading the Scriptures. On the contrary, it will greatly aid you in unravelling their true meaning, to carry to their interpretation a devout mind, wakeful to the impression of their moral beauty, and in sympathy with their divine origin; since nothing is truer than this, — that a study is rendered easy by the interest of the affections in it, and that difficulties disappear before the excitement of feeling. And, on the other hand, when you are reading expressly for improvement and devotion, you will recur, without effort, and consequently without interruption, to the results of your cooler inquiry, and spontaneously make use of the interpretations which your critical scrutiny has proved to be just.

The cautions thus briefly sketched are important for two reasons; one, that there is a tendency in him who has become interested in the critical examination of the sacred writings, to continue to read them critically and with a principal regard to their elucidation, when he ought to be imbibing their spirit; and the other, that the perception of this tendency has been an apology to many for not engaging in such inquiries at all. They esteem it better to go on with their crude, unconnected, and undigested knowledge, which in many cases is only ignorance, (for where they have not inquired, it is impossible they should know,) than to check the fervor of their religious feelings, as they fancy must inevitably be done, by accurate study. But this is a melancholy error. It reminds one of the old pretence that ignorance is the mother of devotion. How can it be rationally supposed that a careful inquiry concerning the history, the text, and the signification of the Bible, should necessarily alienate the mind from the true spirit of the Bible! I say necessarily, because the tendency alluded to undoubtedly exists; and, however it may be accounted for, it evi-

dently needs to be cautiously guarded against. This may be done. Do it, then, as you value the warmth and fervor of your soul. Do it, always and perseveringly, by daily reading in that frame of spiritual self-application which I have recommended. Thus you will avoid the danger; and while you arrive at enlarged views of the nature, contents, history, and purposes of these sacred records, you will retain and increase the susceptibility of your heart to all their representations of duty and heaven.

In regard to the choice of other books, it would take up too much room to enter into all the many considerations which might be started. Let it be sufficient to say in general, that, if you would form a religious character, you are always to have in view the two objects already named, — religious knowledge and moral improvement. Your books, therefore, will belong to one or the other of these two departments; and it would be well to have one of each kind always lying by you in the course of being read. That is, be at all times engaged with two books; one of a moral and devotional character, to keep your frame of mind right, and your feelings in harmony with eternal truth; the other, of an instructive character, to enlarge your knowledge, and extend your ideas concerning God, and man, and truth. Then you will never be at a loss for occupation. You will not fritter away precious hours in "wondering what you had better do."

To the better accomplishment of this purpose, it will be well to obtain of your minister, or some competent friend, a list of selected books, in the order in which they should be read. I earnestly recommend this. Many persons read at random, without selection, whatever they may accidentally meet with. They make no inquiry whether a book be good or bad, worth perusal or not; but because it lies in their

way, or has been read by some friend, they read it. How many miserable volumes of trash are thus devoured! and that, too, by persons who would be alarmed at the suspicion that they are prodigally throwing away their time. But they do not pursue the same random course in other matters. They do not choose their food or clothing of the first thing which accidentally presents itself. They take pains, they spend time, they inquire, compare, judge, and select only what they deliberately perceive to be best. And when we treat the body thus, shall we have no care for the mind? Shall we leave it to be fed by any food which chance may bring it, and thus expose it to the risk of pernicious nourishment, to the hazard of being made feeble, sickly, and corrupt? I adjure you, fall not into this too common thoughtlessness. Do not take it for granted, that, because it is a printed book, therefore it must be worth reading. Get advice upon the subject, and read systematically; reflecting, that your object is not amusement, but improvement, — improvement of your religious nature; and that you have no more right to run the hazard of poisoning it through a negligent selection of its nutriment, than to destroy your body by similar means. The religious culture of your mind is a most responsible charge; it is to be effected, in no small degree, by the exercise and guidance it shall receive from books; and how will you lift up your head, when the Judge shall inquire concerning your manner of preparing it for his kingdom, if you have provided for its immortal appetite nothing but unarranged and unselected trash, when stores of the choicest kind were profusely spread before you?

It does not fall within my plan to pursue this subject further, or to treat the many questions which may arise on the choice of books, and habits of reading, in general. It may

be said, in few words, that no work of truth and science, or of elegance and taste, which does not tend to corrupt the morals or create a disrelish for serious thought, need be prohibited to a religious man. Within the limits of this restriction he may freely range. Let him only remember that even the employment of reading may become mere idleness and wastefulness; and that a man may decide respecting his actual principles and character by the character of the books to which he is most attached. He must, therefore, watch and guard his taste. Then he may find it in his power to cause every hour thus spent to minister to the growth of his best attainments.

II. MEDITATION.

This is a great and essential means of improvement. It is essential to self-examination and self-knowledge, without which the hope of progress and of virtue is vain. No one can know his own character, or be aware of the dispositions, feelings, and motives by which he is actuated, except by means of deep and searching reflection. In the crowd of business and the hurry of the world, we are apt to rush on without weighing, as we should, the considerations which urge us; we are liable to neglect that close inspection of ourselves, and that careful reference of our conduct to the unerring standard of right, which are requisite both to our knowing where we are, and to our keeping in the right way. It is necessary that we sometimes pause, and look around us, and consider our ways; that we take observation of the course we are running, and the various influences to which we are subjected, and be sure that we are not driven or drifted from the direction in which we ought to be proceeding. Without this there is no safety.

Meditation, too, is necessary in order to the digesting of religious truth, making familiar what we have learned, and

incorporating it with our own minds. We cannot even retain it in our memories, much less can we be fully sensible of its power and worth, except through the habit of reflecting upon it. We cannot have it ready at command, so as to defend it when assailed, or state it when inquired after, or apply it in the emergencies of life, unless it be familiar to us by habitual meditation; so that even reading loses its value if unaccompanied by reflection. The obligations and motives of duty, the promises, hopes, and prospects of the Christian, the great interests and permanent realities by which he is to be actuated, are not visibly and tangibly present to him, like the scenes of his passing life; and they must be made spiritually present by deliberate meditation, if he would be guided and swayed by them. Indeed, without this, he must be without consideration or devotion, ignorant of the actual state of his character, and in constant danger of falling a sacrifice to the unfriendly influences of the world.

In attempting, therefore, the acquisition of a religious character, it is important that you maintain an habitual thoughtfulness of mind. It has been said, and with perfect truth, that no man pursues any great interest of any kind, in which important consequences are at stake, without a profound and settled seriousness of mind; and that a man of really frivolous disposition never accomplishes any thing valuable. How especially true must this be, in regard to the great interests of religion and eternity! How can you hope to make progress in that perplexing and difficult work, the establishment of a religious character, the attainment of the great Christian accomplishments, without a fixed and habitual thoughtfulness? — a thoughtfulness which never forgets the vastness and responsibility of the work assigned to man, nor loses the consciousness of a relation to more glorious

beings than are found upon the earth. This must be your habit — something more than an occasional musing and reverie, at set times, when you shall force yourself to the task. It must be the uniform condition of your mind; as much so as solicitude to the merchant, who has great treasures exposed to the uncertainties of the ocean and the foe; a solicitude, in your case, not gloomy, or unsocial, or morose, but thoughtful; so that nothing shall be done inconsiderately, or without adverting to the bearing it may have on your character and final prospects.

Then, besides this general state of mind, there must be, as I have said, allotted periods of express meditation. As the precept respecting devotion is, "Pray without ceasing," and yet set times of prayer are necessary, so, also, while we say, "Be always thoughtful," we must add, that particular seasons are necessary on purpose for meditation. You must set apart certain times for reflection, when you shall deliberately sit down and survey with keen scrutiny yourself, your condition, your past life, and the prospect before you; inquire into the state of your religious knowledge and personal attainments; and strengthen your sense of responsibility and purposes of duty, by dwelling on the attributes and government of God, the ways of his providence, the revelations of his Word, the requisitions of his will, the glory of his kingdom, and all the affecting truths and promises which the gospel displays. These are to be subjects of distinct and profound consideration, till your mind becomes imbued with them, and until, filled and inspired by the spiritual contemplation, you are in a manner "changed into the same image as by the Spirit of the Lord." The proper season for this is the season of your daily devotion; when, having shut out the world, and sought the nearer presence of God, your mind is prepared to work fervently. Then, con-

templation, aided by prayer, ascends to heights which it could never reach alone; and sometimes, whether in the body or out of the body it can hardly tell, soars, as it were, to the third heaven, and enjoys a revelation to which, at other hours, it is a stranger.

This, however, is an excitement of mind which is rarely to be expected. Those seasons are "few as angels' visits," which lift the spirit to any thing like ecstasy. They are glimpses of heaven, which the soul, in its present tabernacle, can seldom catch, only frequently enough to afford a brief foretaste of that bliss to which it shall hereafter arrive. Its ordinary musings are less ethereal; happy, undoubtedly, though oftentimes clouded by feelings of sadness and doubt, and by a sense of unworthiness and sin. But, however mixed they may be, they are always salutary. If sad and disheartening, they lead to more vigilant self-examination, that we may discover their cause, and thus rekindle the watchlight that is so essential to right progress. If serene and joyous, they are a present earnest of the peace which is assured to the righteous, and the joy of heart which is one of the genuine fruits of the Spirit. Be not, therefore, troubled or cast down, (indeed, never be cast down, so long as you can say to your soul, Trust in God;) be not, I say, disquieted or cast down, because of the inequalities of feeling with which you enter and leave your closet, and the changes from brightness to gloom, from clearness to obscurity, which often pass over your mind. This, alas! is the inheritance of our frail nature. An equal vigor of thought, clearness of apprehension, force of imagination, fervor of devotion, always perceiving, feeling, adoring, with the same vividness and satisfaction, are to be our portion in the world of spirits. Here we see all things, "as in a glass, darkly;" there we shall see "face to face." Here the truths we rejoice in are

too often like the images of absent friends, which we strive in vain to bring brightly before the eye of our minds; they are shadowy, indistinct, and fleeting. But there they will be like our friends themselves, always present in their own full form and beauty, to dwell in the mind unfadingly, and constitute its bliss. Be satisfied, then, if you sometimes arrive, in your meditations, at that glow of elevated enjoyment which you desire. What you are rather to seek for, is, a calm and composed state of the affections, an equanimity of spirit, a serenity of temper — like the quiet which an affectionate child experiences in the circle of its parents and brothers, where it is not excited to ecstasy by the thought of its father's goodness, but lives beneath it in a state of equal and affectionate trust. Like this should be the habitual experience of the Christian; and if it be thus with you, let not occasional dulness or darkness, coming over your spirit in its religious hours, dishearten or distress you.

This I say, because many persons of truly devout habits have unquestionably suffered much from this cause. In the natural fluctuations of the animal spirits, or the nervous system, or the bodily health, they sometimes find themselves cold at heart, and seemingly insensible to religious considerations. It seems to them that their hearts have waxed gross, that their eyes are closed, and their ears become dull of hearing. In vain do they read and think; they cannot arouse themselves to any thing like a "realizing sense" of these great objects; but regard with a stupid unconcern what at other times has been the source of their chief enjoyment. But let the humble and timid believer be of good cheer. This is not always a sign of guilt, or of desertion by God. It may be traced to the original and unavoidable imperfection of human nature; it is to be lamented as such,

but not to be repented of as sin; and one may not expect to be relieved from it, till the soul is freed from the body. Let him watch the course of his mind, and he will find the same inequality of feeling to exist upon other subjects. He does not at all times take an equal interest in his ordinary concerns, nor does he at all times feel the highest warmth of affection toward his parent, friend, or child. Let him observe others, and he will discover the same variations in them. They will confess it to be so. The oldest and most established Christians will describe themselves to have passed their whole pilgrimage in this state of fluctuation. Read the private journals of distinguished believers, and you find in them frequent complaints of lukewarmness, indifference, and deadness of heart. They mourn over it, they bewail it, they strive against it, and yet it adheres to them as long as they live. It is not, therefore, your peculiar sin, but a common infirmity. Regard it in this light; and do not let it destroy your peace of mind, or lead you to overlook the rational evidence that your heart is right with God.

But, also, on the other hand, — for the Christian's path is hedged in with dangers on every side, and in trying to escape from one it is easy to rush into another, — take heed that you do not unwarrantably apply this consolation, and make this excuse to yourself in cases in which you really deserve blame. Do not let this apology, which is designed only for the comfort of the humble and watchful, be used by you as a cover for negligence and sinful self-confidence. Remember that your unsatisfactory state of religious sensibility may be possibly your fault; and you are not to presume that it is otherwise, until you have faithfully searched and tried. Have you not, for a time, been unreasonably devoted to amusement, or engrossed by unnecessary cares, so

as to have neglected the watching of your heart? Have you not for a season been thoughtless, light-minded, frivolous, and careless of that devout reference to God, by which you should always be actuated? Have you not engaged in some questionable undertaking, or allowed yourself in sloth or self-indulgence, or cherished ill feelings toward others, or permitted your temper to be kept irritated by some unimportant vexations, or let your imagination run loose among forbidden desires? Ask yourself such questions; and perhaps in the nature of your recent occupations you may detect the cause of your present listlessness. If so, change the general turn of your life. In the words of Cowper's hymn, it is only "a closer walk with God," which can bring back "the blessedness you once enjoyed." Now, your heart is desolate and unsatisfied; you find in it "an aching void, which God alone can fill;" and it is only by renewing your acquaintance with him, that you can renew your peace.

But, after all, remember that you are to judge of the real worth of these seasons, not by your enjoyment of them as they pass, not by the luxury or rapture of your contemplation, but by their effect upon your character and principles, by the religious power you gain from them toward meeting the duties and sufferings, the joys and sorrows, the temptations, trials, and conflicts of actual life. Meditation is a means of religion; not to be rested in as a final good, nor allowed to satisfy us, except so far as it imparts to the character a permanent impress of seriousness and duty, and strengthens the principles of faith and self-government. If it add daily vigor to your resolutions, and secure order to your thoughts, serenity to your temper, and uprightness to your life, then it has fulfilled its legitimate purpose. If, on the other hand, it end in the reverie of the hour, then, however fervent and exalted, it is, comparatively speaking,

worthless to yourself and unacceptable to God. Its permanent influence on the character is the true test of its value.

It is easy to see, therefore, that there are three purposes which you have in view — the cultivation of a religious spirit, the scrutiny of your life and character, the renewing of your good purposes.

By the first of these, you are to insure the predominance of a spiritual frame of mind, a perpetual, paramount interest in divine truth, and its incorporation with the frame and constitution of your soul; so that you shall be continually enlarging your apprehensions concerning God, his providence, and his purposes, and shall at the same time make them part of the very substance of your intellectual constitution, the pervading and actuating motives of all your life.

By this means religion becomes to the Christian what the spirit of his profession is to the soldier, — the one present thought, motive, and impulse, absorbing all others, and urging him to his one great object by its mastery over all other thoughts, principles, and affections. The other two purposes of meditation which I mentioned may be described as the surveying and burnishing of the warrior's arms, in preparation for the summons to actual combat; or as the act of the mariner in mid ocean, who every day lifts his instruments to the light of heaven, and consults his charts and his books, that he may learn where he is, and what has been his progress, and whether any change must be made in his course in order to his reaching the intended haven. The warrior who should allow his arms to rust for want of a little daily care, and the mariner who should be shipwrecked from neglect of taking seasonable observations, are emblems of the folly of the man who presses on through life, without ever pausing to scrutinize the principles on which he acts, and rectify the errors he has committed.

This self-examination must be universal; embracing alike the conduct of your external life and the habitual tenor of your mind. You must survey the train of your thoughts, the temper you have sustained, your deportment toward others, your conversation, your employment, the use of your time and of your wealth; you must consider by what sort of motives you are prevailingly guided, what is the probable effect of your example, and whether you are doing all the good which might be reasonably expected of you; you must compare yourself with the example of Jesus Christ, and measure your life by the laws of holy living prescribed in his gospel. And in order that these and other topics may all have their place in the survey, it may not be amiss to keep them by you on a written list. Cotton Mather adopted and recommended the practice of assigning to such inquiries each its particular day of the week; so that every day might have its own topic of reflection, and every topic its due share of attention. Others may find this a useful suggestion.

A renewal of your resolutions is to follow this inquiry. Knowing where you are and what you need, you are to arrange your purposes accordingly. It is a sad error of some to fancy that seeing and acknowledging their faults is all which is required of them. They sit down and bewail them, and in weeping and sorrow waste that energy of mind which should have been exerted in amendment. But it is surely far better, with manly readiness, to rise and act without a tear, than to shed torrents of bitter water, and still go on as before. Regret and remorse naturally express themselves in weeping; but repentance shows itself in action. It may begin in sorrow, but it ends in reformation. And you have little reason to be satisfied with your reflections and your penitence, if they do not issue in prompt and resolute action.

III. Prayer.

As there is no duty more frequently enjoined in the New Testament by our Savior and the apostles, so there is none which is a more indispensable and efficacious means of religious improvement than prayer; for which reasons it demands particular attention.

The practice of devotion is a sign of spiritual life, and a means of preserving it. No one prays heartily without some deep religious sentiment to actuate him. This sentiment may be but occasionally felt; it may be transient in duration; but the exercise of it in acts of devotion tends to render it habitual and permanent, and its frequent exercise causes the mind at length to exist always in a devout posture. He who truly prays, feels, during the act, a sense of God's presence, authority, and love; of his own obligations and unworthiness; of his need of being better. He feels grateful, humble, resigned, anxious for improvement. He who prays often, often has these feelings, and, by frequent repetition, they become customary and constant. And thus prayer operates as an active, steady, powerful means of Christian progress.

Indeed, nothing effectual is to be done without it. That it is a chief duty, even natural reason would persuade us. That it is a condition on which divine blessings are bestowed, Christianity assures us. That it is a high gratification and enjoyment, every one knows who has rightly engaged in it. And that it is of all means of moral restraint and spiritual advancement the most effective, no one can doubt, who understands how powerfully it stirs and agitates the strongest and most active principles of man, and how complete is the dominion which those principles have over his character and conduct. All this is clear and sufficient, without adding the assurance of the Savior, that it is

effectual to draw down spiritual aid from Heaven. Add this, and the subject is complete. It is, both naturally and by appointment, a chief duty of man; from the nature of the soul and the intercourse it opens with God, it is the first enjoyment; and through its own intrinsic power and the promise of Jesus, it is the most effectual instrument of moral and spiritual culture.

Perhaps you have been accustomed to the performance of this duty from your childhood. You were early taught to repeat your prayers, morning and evening. Pains were taken to make you understand the nature of the duty, and to give you right impressions in performing it. Perhaps you have retained these impressions, and have continued to this time the practice of sincere devotion. On the other hand, you may have lost those impressions, and become neglectful of the duty. Or perhaps you are so unhappy as never to have received instruction on this head. You have passed through childhood without the practice, and without the sentiment which should inspire it; and now, when awakened to a sense of your responsibility, you find yourself a stranger to the mercy-seat. But, however the case may be, the sense of your religious wants now urges you to devotion; and you are anxious to make that acquaintance with God, which alone can secure you peace. How to perform the duty, how to gain the satisfaction, how to reap the advantage, are points upon which you are anxious to obtain direction.

First of all, let me urge upon you the importance of a plan, and of customary seasons for your devotions. Have your settled appointments of time and place, and let nothing interfere with them. Many would persuade you that this is too formal; that you should be left more at liberty; that, as you are to pray always, it is quite needless to assign any

special season for the duty. And one may conceive of a person having arrived at so high a measure of spiritual attainment, that his thoughts should be a perpetual worship, and retirement to his closet would bring his mind no nearer to God. But such is, at best, an infrequent case; at any rate, it is not yours: you are a beginner; it can never be yours, except you use the requisite means of arriving at it; and certainly among the surest means is the custom of setting apart stated seasons for devotion. So that the very reason assigned for neglecting becomes a strong reason for observing them. You must feed the soul as you do the body, furnishing it with suitable nourishment at suitable intervals. You must keep its armor bright and serviceable, as does the soldier in human warfare, who examines and restores it at a certain hour daily. If it were left to be done at any convenient season, a thousand trifling engagements might cause the work to be deferred again and again, till irretrievable injury should accrue. You have too many other engagements and enticements daily and hourly occurring, to make it safe for you to leave this to accidental convenience or inclination. In order to secure its performance, you must put it on the list of your daily indispensable engagements; and, as it is part of your routine at certain hours to breakfast and dine, and at certain hours to attend to the concerns of your household and profession, so also must it be to retire at certain hours for religious worship. The wisdom and experience of all the religious world insist on this; and it would not be necessary to state it so urgently, if it did not seem to be a notion growing into favor with some, that, as the spirit, and not the form, is the essential thing, it is better not to be burdened with methods and rules, but simply to pray always; which, there is reason to fear, would in practice be found a precept to pray never.

Assign to yourself, therefore, some convenient hour, when you shall be secure from interruption, and not hurried by the call of other business. If you are much engaged in active affairs, you may, perhaps, be unable to secure this, unless you rise for the purpose in the morning, and sit up for it at night. This, then, you must do. Deprive yourself of a few moments' sleep, morning and evening. And I may ask here, whether the multitude of persons who excuse their inattention to religious exercises by their want of time, do not thereby expose themselves to a suspicion of insincerity. For, if they were truly in earnest, it would be a very little thing to retire to their chambers fifteen minutes earlier, and to rise from their beds fifteen minutes sooner. If they were aware of the magnitude of the gain, the sacrifice would seem insignificant. Nay, they might even perform the duty upon their beds; there would be no want of time then. And some, who, from the misfortune of poverty, have no place to which they can retire, being compelled to live at every moment in the company of others, should learn to feel that the bed is their closet; that, when lying there, they can "pray to the Father who seeth in secret;" and that they need make no complaint of want of opportunity, so long as they may follow the Psalmist, who said, "I remember thee on my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches."

Having, then, your stated times, if you would make them in the highest measure profitable, observe the following rules: First of all, when the hour has arrived, seek to excite in your mind a sense of the divine presence, and of the greatness of the act in which you are engaging. Summon up the whole energy of your mind. Put all your powers upon the stretch. Do not allow yourself to utter a word, to use an expression, thoughtlessly, nor without setting before yourself, in a distinct form, its full meaning. Remember

the words of Ecclesiasticus: "When you glorify the Lord, exalt him as much as you can; for even yet will he far exceed; and when you exalt him, put forth all your strength, and be not weary; for you can never go far enough." Pour your whole soul, the utmost intensity of your feelings, into your words. One sentence uttered thus is better than the cold repetition of an entire liturgy. For this reason, let your prayer be preceded by meditation. In this way make an earnest effort after a devout temper. While you thus muse, the fire of your devotion will kindle, and then you may "speak with your tongue;" then you may breathe out the adoring sentiments of praise and thanksgiving, the holy aspirations after excellence and grace, the humble confessions of your contrite spirit, the glowing emotions of Christian faith. As you proceed, you will probably find yourself increasing in warmth and energy; especially if you give way to the impulse of your feelings, and do not check them by watching them too closely. To do this chills the current of devotion, and changes your prayer from the simple expression of desire and affection into an exercise of mental philosophy. Wherefore, having warmed your mind, give it free way, and let its religious ardor flow on. But if, as will often be the case, you find your thoughts wander, and your feelings cool, then pause, and by silent thought bring back the mind to its duty; and thus intermix meditation with prayer, in such manner that you shall never fall into the mechanical, unmeaning repetition of mere words.

As your object is not to get through with a certain task, but to pray devoutly, you will find it well to vary your method according to circumstances, and not always adhere to the same mode. I have sometimes suspected, that one cause of the little efficacy of public worship may be the in-

variable method of conducting it; whereby it is rendered formal, monotonous, and deficient in excitement. But, however this may be, it is quite certain that a similar unvaried routine would be extremely injudicious in private devotion. In this respect, a very considerable latitude is desirable. As you are not to consult the wants or the convenience of others, but your own duty alone, you may have a single regard to what shall suit the immediate temper and exigencies of your own mind, without being bound by any prescribed rule as to subject, language, or posture. You will always have by you the Bible to quicken and guide you. But sometimes the first verse you read may lead you to feelings, thoughts, and prayers, which shall so occupy your soul that you will read no more. And it is better to read but one verse, which thus influences your whole spiritual nature, than to read chapters in the unheedful way that is too often practised. At another time, however, the reading of the Scriptures may be your principal occupation, and your less excited mind may not flow beyond a short ejaculation at the close of each verse. Sometimes you may find it well to assist yourself by a printed or written form; always, however, taking care to leave it, when any sentiment or feeling arises within you which is not there expressed. The main advantage of a form in private is, to suggest thoughts and stimulate the mind; as soon as it has done this, we should lay it down, and go on of ourselves. Then, presently, if we find it necessary, we may again recur to the form, and make the whole exercise, if we please, an alternate use of the form, and of our own language. In all this we must be guided by the occasion.

Similar varieties may be allowed in regard to the subjects of our devotions. There are some great and leading topics of adoration and supplication, which may at no time be

forgotten or omitted. But it cannot be necessary in every prayer to go over the whole field of devotional sentiment. It is best that we confine ourselves principally to those which are most immediately interesting at the time, and seek to render our present circumstances, fortunes, failings, and prospects, the nourishment of our devotion. The temptations of our peculiar lot, our recent trials of temper, fortitude, and faith, the dealings of Providence with our family and friends, the exposure, wants, and improvement of those most dear to us, — these, as they are at other moments of the greatest concern to us, should be the objects upon which we should, first of all, seek the blessing of God. This it is to connect every thing with religion; in this way we shall avoid the error, into which some have fallen, of making religion a wholly independent existence, with no reference to the ordinary duties of active life, and no bearing on its common concerns, and of course exercising no influence upon them. Such persons have exhibited the strange spectacle of two contradictory characters in one man, the one apparently devout, the other immoral. But the consistent Christian will never separate his religion from his life, nor his life from his religion. He will seek to incorporate them most intimately with each other. And this he will effect, in no small degree, by making his daily prayers, not the expression of general principles, and indefinite confession, the recitation of articles of faith, or declaration of vague desires after holiness; but the expression of those sentiments which belong to his peculiar condition, and a perpetual reference to his personal character and circumstances. It is for these and concerning these that he will pray; and therefore his prayers will vary as these do.

So much, in a general way, respecting the subjects of private devotion. Next we may say a few words respecting

the posture. This need not be invariably the same. Many have laid stress upon it; but it seems to me there is a certain freedom to be allowed in this particular to those who are invited "to come boldly to the throne of grace." Provided we secure the right state of heart, it can matter little what the attitude of the body may be. There are times when the lowest prostration seems best to express and promote the sentiment of lowly adoration and broken-hearted humiliation in which the worshiper supplicates his Father; but again, in a different tone of spirit, he is prompted to stand erect, and lift up his head and hands, as an attitude most corresponding to the elevated sentiments by which he is filled; while sometimes he feels that in walking to and fro, or sitting with his head leaning upon his hands, he can best summon his mind to spiritual worship. Cecil says, that his oratory was a little walk in the corner of his chamber, where he paced backward and forward as he prayed. Others have been able to be devout only on their knees. What I would briefly urge is, that you be not scrupulous on this head. Allow yourself in any mode. Try various modes. Adopt, from time to time, that which best cultivates and encourages the right tone of feeling. At the same time, you will probably find some truth in the remark, that the adoption of a suitable posture aids the adoption of a suitable frame of mind; that the expression of reverence in the attitude conveys a feeling of reverence to the spirit; for which reason it will be generally best to assume the posture most associated with the sentiments of devotion, and depart from it only when the change may be favorable to engagedness and fervor of mind. The soul may be as truly prostrated when you stand, or walk, or ride, or work, or lie in your bed, as when you kneel before the altar.

Neither be too scrupulous concerning the use of your

lips. It is oftentimes as well, or better, to pray mentally, without uttering a sound. Yet at the same time there is danger, if this become our practice, that it will end in turning prayer into meditation, and that our hours of devotion will become hours of musing and reverie. This would be injurious; and therefore we should commonly use articulate language. Our thoughts are so much associated with words, and words with their sounds, that it is not easy to think connectedly and profitably without the use of speech. It is well, as I have before said, to muse for a time; but when, after musing, the fire is kindled within us, as the Psalmist expresses it, then we should "speak with our tongues." We shall find this an essential aid in rendering our sentiments and train of thought distinct to ourselves; and in so impressing them on our memories, that we shall be able to employ them afterward for our guidance and comfort. Good sentiments, which merely pass through the mind, but are not put into words, are apt to leave no trace behind them; and he who should habitually indulge himself in thinking his prayers, instead of expressing them, would find it extremely difficult to say what he had prayed for, or to turn to any account in common life the employment of his sacred hours.

Meditation is, in its nature, an act very distinct from prayer, and must be very distinct in its effects. Some effects may be common to the two; but much of the peculiar and the happiest influence of devotion on the character must be lost to the man who allows musing to take the place of prayer. It is one thing to contemplate a blessing and desire it; quite another to ask for it. The latter may require a very different temper of mind from the former; and it is plain that the promise of God is given to those who ask, not to those who desire; to those who employ petition, not those

who are content with contemplation. Therefore arrange your thoughts in words; and generally give them a distinct utterance in sound; pausing occasionally for reflection, and being certain that you do not employ words only, but that the thoughts which they express are actually in your mind.

In regard to the choice of words, be not too anxious. Take those which express your meaning, without regard to their elegance or eloquence. You will naturally fall into language borrowed from the Scriptures, and that is always good and appropriate. Only take heed that you do not use it mechanically, and without due consideration of its significance. But when you do not use the terms of Scripture, take those which express what you mean, and consider nothing further. I would lay the more stress upon this, because some persons actually plead, as an excuse for the neglect of this duty, that they have no command of language, and cannot readily find correct and proper words. This would be a very good reason for not attempting to pray in public; and it were to be wished that some, who are forward to exhibit themselves in this act, would consider it more seriously. It is an injury to religion, when he, who speaks to God in the public assembly, or the circle of social worship, does it in rude, hesitating, confused, inappropriate, or ungrammatical language. But in private, when you are simply to pour out your heart, and have no witness but Heaven, allow yourself to put aside all solicitude on this head. Speak as you feel, and what you feel; only taking care that your feelings are right, and that you know what they are. Alas! you will often find it a task difficult enough to regulate your feelings, govern your thoughts, repress wandering desires, keep out vain images, and bring your soul to a proper attitude of reverence and love, without the added embarrassment of arranging words by the rules of rhetoric

and taste. This is an occupation which interferes with the spirituality of the duty you are performing. I beseech you to disregard it altogether.

As respects times and seasons, it may be considered as a salutary rule, that it is better to pray often than long. There are times, undoubtedly, when the mind is glowing and the heart full, that the exercise may be advantageously continued through a long period, and the disciple, like his Master, may spend the whole night in prayer. It would be a pity to check the current when it flows thus spontaneously, or to lose the luxury of such a season. There may be occasions, too, when duty and improvement shall seem to demand an extraordinary continuance in devotion. I do not therefore recommend that you should limit yourself to a certain stinted number of minutes. But, as a general rule, do not covet long prayers; rather multiply their number than increase their length. This is the rule of Christ, who insists that we pray often and always, but that we do not pray long. A most wise regulation; for the mind is easily wearied by a long exercise, and is likely to return to it slowly and reluctantly; and in the interval, it is liable to go back, like the swinging pendulum, into a directly opposite state. From which cause it may too readily happen that the extended devotions of the morning shall exhaust the attention of the mind, and produce religious listlessness during the day. Whereas, a shorter act of worship, which should excite without exhausting, which should kindle the fire, but not burn it out, would leave a glow upon the feelings, that would abide for hours, and prompt to holy thoughts and spontaneous acts of worship at short intervals throughout the day. In this manner, the great object of keeping up a religious wakefulness and sensibility is with greater certainty obtained, and the whole current of life more surely colored by the infusion of religious sentiment.

Let this, therefore, be your method. Accustom yourself to what is called *ejaculatory* prayer; that is, to very frequent petitions and thanksgivings, bursting out from your soul at all times and wherever you may be. Walk with God as you would journey with an intimate friend; not satisfied to make formal addresses to him at stated seasons, but turning to him in brief and familiar speech whenever opportunity offers, or occasion or feeling prompts. Remember that ceremonious addresses are appointed, and are chiefly necessary, on social and ceremonious occasions, when a company of men is together, and many minds are to act at once. They can act and be acted upon simultaneously in no other way; and therefore, in civil and state affairs, as well as in religious, this method is in use. But when we come to more private, domestic, confidential intercourse, we abandon these formal and complimentary arrangements, and find it most natural and happy to do as occasion prompts, in a free and unrestrained style of conduct and of speech. Just so it should be in our more private and confidential communion with the great Father of our spirits. The more it is unembarrassed by precise forms and ceremonious appendages, and left to the promptings of the feelings and of the moment, the more appropriate is it to our title of "children," and the greater is the felicity which it furnishes.

It has, of course, been implied in the preceding remarks, that all is to be done in the spirit of devotion. In what manner this may be effected, it is necessary to state more distinctly; and the rules to be given for this end will sufficiently explain in what that spirit consists.

First, then, the genuine, effectual prayer is the prayer of faith; not of words, not of form; not an exercise of the understanding, reasoning on the attributes and dispensations of God, and uttering its judgments on duty; but an address

to him, accompanied by a confident persuasion that he hears and regards. "He that cometh to God," says the apostle, "must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Of this there must be no doubt on the mind. You must realize that you are actually speaking to him, and he listening to you, as truly as when you address yourself to a visible mortal; and you must have as real a conviction that something depends on the act, and as real a desire to receive what you ask for, as when you make a request for some important favor to a human friend. If you doubt, your prayer is weak and inefficacious. "Ask in faith," says James, "nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed." His uncertain and fluctuating mind wants stability, and cannot receive a blessing. Therefore it is added, "Let not that man think that he shall obtain any thing from the Lord." May we not suppose that much of the dissatisfaction attendant on our prayers, and much of their unfruitfulness, is owing to the doubtful, hesitating state of mind in which they are offered? And what can be more miserably destructive of all energy and interest in the employment? If you doubt whether you shall be heard, you will pray timidly and coldly, without courage or spirit. If your prayers are thus lifeless, your conduct will be so too, and all spiritual savor will fade away from your life. Do not, then, allow in yourself this doubtfulness of temper. The most extravagant fanaticism, which sees a visible light descending as it prays, and finds an answer in presentiments and dreams, is not more mistaken, and is far more happy. Give yourself up to the assurance, that they who ask shall be heard, and go "boldly to the throne of grace." Jesus, by his invitations and doctrine, has given you a right to this confidence; and it is only in the exercise of it, humbly,

but firmly, that you may "cast out the fear which hath torment."

Next, your prayer must be fervent; that is, your affections must be engaged and interested in it. You must not barely, as a reasoning philosopher, or well-instructed pupil, declare what you coolly judge to be right, and assert that man, in his present relations, ought to seek and do what is right, and that God, as the Father and Governor, should be adored and obeyed, (which is the tenor of the devotional exercises one sometimes hears;) but you must set yourself actually to do these things. You can only be said to pray when the sentiment you utter springs from your heart; and, rising above all the arguments and persuasions of the wise, you pour out your feelings as a little child confides its thoughts to a parent's bosom; thinking only of your own dependence and need, and of God's ability and readiness to succor you, and earnestly aspiring after that purity and piety which you feel to constitute the excellence and bliss of man. When this fervent glow is upon your mind, you pray in the spirit. Seek for it. Be not content without it.

In the next place, do not allow yourself to grow weary. Persevere; however ill satisfied, however discouraged, persevere. Open the New Testament, and you will see how this is insisted upon, again and again, and by various illustrations. "That men should always pray, and never faint," was the great moral of more than one of our Lord's parables; and to "pray without ceasing" was the corresponding direction of his apostles. Situated as we are in this world, there is danger that, perceiving little immediate fruit from our devotions, we should relax our diligence in them; first doubting their value, then losing our interest in them, and then ceasing to perform them. But we should recollect, that, in this case, as in all the most important and admirable

provisions of divine wisdom, it is the order of Heaven to give, not to a single exertion, nor to a few acts, nor even to some continuance of effort, but only to a long, unremitted, persevering effort. We read this lesson every where. Look at that glorious operation of God, by which the sun cherishes and matures the fruits of the earth for the sustenance of its creatures. It is not accomplished by one act, nor by several acts, nor yet by sudden, violent exertions of power. He sends out his beams steadily, day by day, month after month; yet the fruit is still green, the harvest immature; and if, weary with the work, he should abandon it, famine might devastate the globe, when but six days' longer perseverance would see it successful. The whole toil of the season might thus be lost, when a trifling addition only was necessary to render it all-effective. In how many other cases is the same truth illustrated! Will you, then, abandon your prayers, because you do not witness the effect from them which you desire? Will you be discouraged, when, by a little longer continuance, you may receive the full blessing at once? Shall the husbandman "wait patiently," and will you, looking for an immortal harvest, lose it for want of patience? No. This is the eternal, immutable rule in regard to all great acquisitions. Piety and virtue, character and immortality, depend upon a long succession of actions, neither of them, taken singly, of essential moment, yet all, in the aggregate, essential to effect the great end in view. Apply this consideration to your prayers, and resolutely persevere.

Thus it is the humble prayer of confident faith, fervent and persevering, from which you are to hope benefit and acceptance.

But you may ask, "How shall I know that it is accepted, and with what answer should I be satisfied?"

To the first part of this question, there is but one reply. If you are conscious of having prayed aright, you may be assured that your prayer is accepted. You can have no external evidence of the fact; but the Scriptures every where declare that a right prayer is certainly accepted. This, then, is a reason for self-examination, and for carefully regulating the state of your mind.

You may imagine, however, that you are rather to judge by the answer to your prayers; and that if, after offering earnest petitions for certain blessings, you find them denied, you are to suppose that your devotions are not accepted.

In regard to this, I observe, that the purpose of prayer is twofold — particular and general; the first, to supplicate certain specific blessings which we need or desire; the second, to obtain the divine favor in general; or, which is equivalent to it, to obtain that state of mind and heart which is always an object of complacency with God, and secures his permanent approbation. Now, it is evident that the latter is an object infinitely more important than the former. It is of no consequence whether you receive certain gifts of health, or safety, or prosperous affairs, in comparison with the importance of attaining that frame of soul which God approves, and which will fit you for heaven. If, then, you have plainly gathered from your devotions the advantage of a religious growth, — if you are brought by them nearer to God, formed into the likeness of Jesus Christ, and made superior to the things of earth and sense, — then you have gained the highest objects which man may aspire to, and should feel no dissatisfaction or doubt because inferior blessings are denied. Having received the greater, you should be content not to receive the less. And this is a sufficient reply to the second part of the question stated above, viz., "With what answer shall I be satisfied?" Be

satisfied with that answer which is found in the improving state of your own religious affections; in the peace, serenity, confidence, and hope, which belong to a mind habitually conversant with God, and which God bestows only on such.

I do not mean to say that other and more specific answers may not be sometimes given; for doubtless the devout mind may often have reason to trace particular blessings, and with a practised eye may trace them, to a source which has been opened in reply to the prayer of faith. When you shall perceive it to be so in your own case, happy will you be; and you will not fail to acknowledge it with suitable gratitude. But what I mean to say is, that this is not what you are habitually to expect: you are not to wait for this in order to the satisfaction of your mind. God feeds his children with spiritual food; and it is one part of his discipline of their faith to deny them temporal blessings in order to the more abundant bestowal of those that are spiritual; to advance the moral man to perfection through the disappointment or mortification of the outward man. Do not, then, be uneasy, because your prayers may, at first view, seem inefficacious. The service of truth and virtue is not to be rewarded by the wages of this world's goods. Health, strength, riches, prosperity, are not the best, they are not the appropriate recompense, for self-denial, humility, benevolence, and purity. The true recompense is eternal and imperishable. If you have this, why be dissatisfied that you have not the other? If you have this, how can you fancy that God has not accepted your prayer?

To which it may be added, that, if you prayed aright, you prayed in the spirit of submission; not only acknowledging, but feeling, the wisdom of Heaven to be greater than your own, and desiring to obtain only such gifts as that wisdom

should judge it best to bestow. Such gifts, of course, are granted. If, therefore, you were sincere, you should be content. You are not relieved, perhaps, from the trouble against which you prayed; the evil you fear comes, the good you desire is denied, notwithstanding your earnest supplication. But does it follow that your prayer is slighted? Believe it not. What you designed was, to ask blessings; you named the things which you esteemed such; but at the same time you knew that your judgment was fallible. If God has refused the things specified, it is because in his judgment they would not prove blessings, and he has bestowed in their stead an increase of faith, which is a real blessing. Or perhaps I may say, he has proposed to you a discipline of your faith, which will prove a transcendent good, unless, by your blind discontent and misuse of it, you turn it into a curse.

It will follow from these remarks, that we are to dwell in prayer on topics rather of a spiritual than of a temporal nature; that we should ask such things as relate rather to our character than to our condition, rather to our religious than to our worldly prosperity; for, these being the chief objects of desire and happiness, (so much so, that our petitions for earthly good oftentimes receive no reply but in the state of our own minds,) it must follow that they should be our chief objects of interest and desire in our exalted hours of communication with God. Our religious addresses in those hours are made up of adoration, thanksgiving, confession, petition. Now, two of these, adoration and confession, relate to spiritual objects exclusively. The other two relate to objects of both a spiritual and temporal character, the blessings and wants of both soul and body. But it is plain that the former far exceed the latter in number and in importance, and should, therefore, occupy the larger share of

attention. If, then, you would do what is most consonant to the nature of the exercise, and your own most real wants, if you would receive blessings corresponding to the petitions you express, you will dwell principally on spiritual and immortal good; seeking first of all, in prayer as at all times, "the kingdom of God and its righteousness." You will do this, also, if you would copy the pattern which our Lord has given; for of the seven sentences of the prayer which he taught his disciples, only one has relation to man's temporal condition. You will do it, if you would imitate our great Exemplar and Master, whose recorded prayers have exclusive regard to the welfare of his spiritual kingdom and the bestowment of internal blessings.

And it is not to the example alone of the Savior that you are to have reference in your prayers. You are also to regard him as the Mediator, through whom they are to be offered. It belongs to the system of our religion, that the thought of its Founder should be associated, in the minds of its disciples, with all that they are and do; with their sense of obligation, and their sentiments of piety. They are "to do every thing in the name of the Lord Jesus;" with a consciousness of their connection with him, and of their dependence upon the instruction, motives, and strength, which they have received from him. They are "to walk by faith in the Son of God." His image is to be blended with their whole life. Especially is this to be the case in the acts of life which are strictly and peculiarly religious. "Whatsoever ye ask in my name, believing." "Giving thanks unto God and the Father by him." It is only through his instruction, authority, and encouragement, that they know their privilege of filial worship, and are enabled so to offer it that they may look for acceptance. The hope of pardon on the confession of sin is grounded upon what he

has done, suffered, and declared; and the confidence with which the penitent seeks forgiveness and life is owing to his trust in the word of Jesus, and his being able to lean on him as a Friend and Advocate, when he casts himself a suppliant before God. Understand, then, that the acceptable prayer is that which is made in the name of the great Intercessor; and let your heart be warmed and imboldened in your devotions by the consciousness of your relation to him "whom the Father heareth always."

I will add but two further remarks before closing this topic. First, I have all along assumed that I am addressing a person sincerely engaged in the pursuit of religious attainments. This sincerity of pursuit is a fundamental requisite, without which all exhortations, means, assistance, sacrifices, will be only thrown away. If, therefore, after having made some effort after a spirit of devotion, in pursuance of the course recommended, you find, as men sometimes do, that you derive from it neither improvement nor satisfaction, I recommend to you to examine whether you are really in earnest; whether you do actually, in your heart, desire religious improvement; whether, in short, there be not in you a lurking preference for your present state of mind, and an attachment to some passion, taste, or pursuit, incompatible with a zealous devotedness to Christian truth, and a suitable attention to the discipline which it demands. Many are, no doubt, prevented from advancement by secret hinderances of this nature, of whose operation they are not at all aware. If, upon inquiry, you cannot discover that it is so with you, then examine strictly the methods you have pursued, and the observances you have practised. You will probably find that they have been in some particulars injudiciously selected, or improperly or insufficiently attended; that you have failed in a resolute, steadfast, systematic

adherence to your own rules; that you have habitually allowed yourself in something wrong, or neglected something right. Look after your mistake. When you shall have discovered and corrected it, you may be certain of securing the improvement you desire.

Secondly, take heed that you do not allow yourself to fancy that an observance of these or similar rules constitutes all your duty under this head. Do not forget that the devotion which Christianity teaches is nothing less than perpetually thinking, feeling, and acting, as becomes a child of God, — a perpetual worship. This is the end at which you are to aim — an end, however, which is not to be attained without the use of means; and the directions in the preceding pages are designed simply to point out some of the means. Some persons do not need such directions. For them they are not designed. But there are others to whom they must be welcome and wholesome. Let such use them, but without forgetting that they are means only. Let them guard, from the first and always, against the idea that the practice of these will secure the great object, without any further exertion or sacrifice; that, to be devout men, they have only to observe stated seasons, and perform stated acts. There cannot be a more pernicious error. It is at variance with the whole nature and spirit of Christianity. God is to be served by the entire life; by its actions as well as its thoughts, its duties as well as its desires, its deeds as well as its feelings.

The religious man must have the frame of his mind and the tenor of his conduct at all times religious; in the market and the family no less than in the closet and the church. Indeed, considering how much more of life is spent abroad in action and trial than is passed in the worship and contemplation of retirement, it is plainly of greater conse-

quence to watch and labor in the world than in private. Besides that it is easier to be religiously disposed for an hour a day, when reading the Bible or kneeling at the altar, than it is to be so during the many other hours which are full of the world's temptations, and when all the irregular passions are liable to be excited. Remember, then, to try your prayers by your life; you may know how sincere they are by their agreement or disagreement with your habitual sentiments and conduct. Regulate your life by your prayers; in vain do you think yourself religious, if you go with holy words and humble confessions to the divine presence, but at other times live in thoughtlessness and sin. True religion is a single thing. Devout exercises form a part of its exhibition; holy living forms another part. Unless they exist together, it is to no purpose that they exist at all. To separate them is to destroy the religion. To this consideration, then, let your perpetual and vigilant attention be given; and be satisfied with your hours of devotion only when they exercise a sacred and constant influence over the condition of your mind and life, and have made them holy to the Lord.

IV. PREACHING.

From the more private means of religious improvement we pass to the consideration of those which are in their nature public.

Preaching is a divine institution; and its authority and wisdom have been illustriously justified in the success which has attended it in every age of the church. It is to a publication from the lips of living teachers, that the gospel owes its spread through so large a portion of the globe. At its first introduction, at its reformation, and in its present diffusion, it has been the "company of the preachers" that has arrested attention to its divine truths, and subdued the hearts of men to its holy power. And it always must be

the case, however great may be the efficacy of those more personal instruments of which we have spoken, that the pulpit shall be the main engine for the incitement and instruction of the individual mind, and the maintenance of the power of religion in the Christian world.

Multitudes, however, habitually attend the preaching of the gospel with little profit, and with no adequate apprehension of its purpose or value. Habit, thoughtlessness, inattention, worldliness, cause its sublime instructions to be unheeded, and render its powerful appeals unimpressive. It may have been so with you in times past. But if you are now truly awake to the necessity of studying the improvement of your character, and making God's will the rule of your life, you will listen eagerly to the preaching of his truth, and drink it in as a thirsty man water. I say nothing, therefore, to urge the duty of attendance in the house of prayer. You will esteem it one of your privileges, and will feel that, however imperfectly the word may be dispensed, it is yet full of a divine savor, and profitable to any one who seeks his soul's good rather than his mind's entertainment.

In order to the greatest advantage from this duty, it is well, in the first place, to give heed to the manner in which the other hours of the Sabbath are spent. There can be no doubt that one considerable cause of the inefficacy of preaching is to be found in the circumstance that the remainder of the Sabbath is passed in a manner little likely to prepare the mind for its religious services, and suited to obliterate the impressions received from them. The sentiments exited in holy time, instead of being cherished, are checked and smothered by the uncongenial engagements of the rest of the day; and Sunday becomes, at length, even a day for hardening the heart, through this habitual resistance of the most solemn truths. For, when exposed to their fre-

quent repetition, if it do not yield to them, it must inevitably become callous to them. This evil you are to guard against, by making the whole occupation of the day harmonize with that portion of it which is spent in public worship. And to do this implies no fanatical recluseness or morose sullenness. It implies nothing but the endeavor of a reasonable man, who finds that the cares of the six days tend to distract his feelings from religion, to counteract them on the day set apart for that purpose. It is only saying, with regard to all worldly occupations, what Burke said of politics in the pulpit: Six days are full of them, and six days are enough; let us give one day to something better.

You will, therefore, be careful so to spend your morning hours, that you shall enter the sanctuary with a prepared mind, — already touched with a sense of God, and tuned to his praise. Your reading and your thoughts will be directed to this purpose; and instead of cherishing or inviting vain thoughts and a light state of feeling, by lounging over a newspaper, or a novel, or by conversation on the passing events of the day, you will occupy yourself on such subjects as shall hallow the temper of your mind, and exclude the crowd of impertinent desires. Then you will be ready to join feelingly in the public service of your Maker, and listen profitably to the exhortations of the pulpit.

You have doubtless observed in your own case, and heard it remarked by others, that the same discourse, under different circumstances, seems like a very different thing; that what at one time is listened to with pleasure and interest, at another is heard with indifference. To what can this be owing, but to the variation in the hearer's state of mind? The discourse is the same; but it addresses itself to a soul at one time tuned to the occasion and the subject, and at another tuned to something else. So important is adapta-

tion, as might be illustrated in a thousand ways. Hence you will study to carry a prepared mind to the hearing of the word, that you may not fail of receiving the utmost edification. Otherwise you may sit under the most powerful ministry, and hear divine truth dispensed with an eloquence worthy of angels, and yet sit unmoved. It can be powerful to your heart, it can effectually promote your progress in the Christian life, only through your own preparation to receive it, and in proportion to that preparation.

Let me also caution you to remember that there is good and important matter belonging to every subject which the pulpit may treat; and it is very unwise (to use the mildest expression) to turn away dissatisfied, because a sermon does not happen to fall in with the state of your feelings. Hearers are often guilty of great injustice in this way. They are too ready to measure the preacher's fidelity by the degree in which he speaks to their own immediate experience. They are earnestly engaged in particular views, feelings, trains of thought, processes of experience, which, filling their mind, seem to them all in all; and if the preacher does not touch upon these, they condemn him as dry, cold, and jejune. But they should consider that there are other minds to be suited besides their own, and that what is so ill adapted to themselves may be precisely what is needed by others; nay, precisely what they themselves may need at another time. Instead of expressing dissatisfaction, they should rejoice that every one receives in turn a portion adapted to him, and endeavor to elicit something applicable to themselves. If they will but seek, they will often find a seasonable word when they least expect it. Let me entreat you to make this your habit. If you do not, it is plain that many Sundays will be lost to you, (for you cannot have your own case always treated;) and you will, moreover, become a fastidious and

querulous hearer, discontented with yourself, and uncomfortable to others. But if you resolutely bring your mind to take an interest in whatever you hear, you will always find cause for contentment and satisfaction, if not for edification and delight.

Few things are more hostile to such attendance on preaching as shall promote religious improvement, than the habit of listening to sermons as literary or rhetorical efforts, and for the gratification of a literary taste. From the very nature of the case, it must result in constant dissatisfaction. For let it be considered how few of all the authors who have published books, are able to give this gratification; and can it, then, be expected of every preacher? How small a proportion of the thousands who have preached have printed their sermons! and how few of these have a place among the eminent names of literature! Hence it is impossible that every preacher should, every Sunday, satisfy a man who has formed his taste on printed specimens of excellence, and who comes to gratify it at church. It is inevitable that such a one should be disappointed and displeased, far more often than he shall be tolerably gratified. Those who, on this ground, are accustomed to speak harshly of ministers, and to excite discontent in the community, would do well to reflect on the unreasonableness of the requisition, and learn that they injure themselves by looking for what they cannot expect to find, to the neglect of that substantial good which alone is intended to be conveyed. But he who thinks only of improvement, and the religious exercise of his mind, will always find something to engage and satisfy him. Distinguished talent there may not be, nor original thought, nor striking images, nor tasteful composition, nor eloquent declamation; but Christian truth, old and familiar perhaps, but still high and important, there always

will be. Dwelling upon this, excited by it to reflection, occupied in studying by its light his own character and prospects, and the perfections and purposes of God, he has no lack of interesting thought. The preacher becomes but a secondary object. His God, his duty, his salvation, — these are the topics on which his mind runs; and these he can contemplate: he will not be hindered from contemplating them, whatever may be the feebleness or deficiencies of him who ministers at the altar.

Bacon has laid down a rule for profitable reading, which ought to be sacredly applied to preaching, by those who would listen to it profitably: "Read, not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider." What you hear from your minister, "weigh and consider" for a religious end and a personal application. To listen as a critic, with a fastidious nicety about diction, and a captious sensibility to style, is a sure method to defeat what should be the first object with the hearer, as it is the great purpose of the speaker. For which reason, it has been remarked, we are not to be surprised that Paul, with all his energy of speech, made so few converts, and gathered no church, among the Athenians; the sensitive and intellectual taste, and love of ingenious fancies, which distinguished them, formed a habit of mind peculiarly fitted to destroy the capacity for receiving any strong and profound impressions.

In the next place, if you think that, when you leave the house of God, you may discharge from your mind the thoughts and sentiments there excited; if you immediately join in frivolous society and ordinary conversation; if you occupy your time in making visits of ceremony, or in reading the Sunday newspaper and books of amusement, — you can derive little advantage from the service in which you

have engaged. However serious may have been your attendance, however earnest the wish for improvement, you are taking the surest method to render it all vain. The word spoken must be treasured up, the counsels of wisdom must be made to abide in the heart, the instructions and warnings of Heaven must be fixed by reflection and thought, or the impressions you have received will be transitory, and the good purposes which spring up within you will pass away like the early dew. If the preacher have presented arguments for the truth of Christianity, or for the support of any of its great doctrines, of what use has this been to you, if you shall know nothing about them to-morrow? And how can you hope to remember what is so difficult to be retained, if you take no pains to refresh your mind with it by immediate retirement and contemplation? If he have been urging you to the study of your own heart, and pointing out the sources of self-deception, and the means of preservation against the sins which easily beset you, and you have been affected and humbled, and made to resolve on greater watchfulness, of what avail will this be, if you immediately abandon yourself to frivolous topics of thought? and how are you any the better prepared for the temptations and trials of to-morrow, if you thus drive from your mind those views which were to strengthen you? Or, if he have presented to you the elevating truths respecting God, and heaven, and man's prospects of glory, and thus raised in your spirit a glow of divine love and a sense of your exalted destiny, and you at once turn from it all to employments and thoughts which are wholly of earth, then is not that holy excitement worse than lost? Have you not done something to harden your heart, and render it less capable of receiving the same impression again? For you have resisted its motions, and quenched its fire, by calling it back to

this lower world, when it was just beginning to delight itself in heaven.

Depend upon it, that the mere attendance upon public worship is very insufficient, without some care to fix its impressions afterwards and to recall and strengthen what you have heard and enjoyed. It is wise, therefore, to go back from church to retirement, there to think over the truths that you have heard, refresh the feelings that you have indulged, apply to your conscience the doctrine delivered, and supplicate the divine blessing. By habitually doing this, you will in time become possessed of a large fund of religious information and moral truth, which otherwise might have been lost to you; and instead of being in the condition of those who cannot perceive that the pulpit has ever taught them any thing, you will find it a most efficient and persuasive instructor.

It is a custom, with some persons, to make a record of the discourses which they have heard, entering in a book the texts and subjects, together with a brief sketch of the train of remark. This is a very commendable and useful custom, provided it be not allowed to take off one's thoughts from the duty of self-application, and do not become a mere effort of memory and trial of skill. If this be avoided, the practice will be found useful in many respects. The exercise of writing greatly assists that of thinking, and discovers to one whether his ideas are distinct and clear. It enables and compels him to look closely at the subject, so that he cannot dismiss it with the cursory and impatient examination which he might be otherwise tempted to give it. It enables him afterwards to read, with distinctness, the impressions which he received, and to revive the purposes which he formed in consequence of them. His record becomes a spiritual monitor, reminding him, whenever he

consults it, of the lessons he has learned, and the expostulations he has heard; and prompting him to a more definite comparison of his actual attainments with the standard which has been placed before him. The advantages which may thus be derived from it will be far more than a compensation for all the trouble attending it.

But whether you make such memoranda or not, the practice of recalling to mind the instructions and reflections of God's house, if systematically pursued, will save you from the pain of making the complaint which we hear from so many that they cannot remember what they have heard, oftentimes not even the text; and this, too, from persons who can repeat all the particulars of a long story to which they have listened, or a longer conversation in which they have taken part. Why this difference? Partly because they attended with greater interest to the story and the conversation; partly because these are more easily remembered than a formal discourse; but principally because these are matters that they are accustomed to recall to mind and repeat, which they have not been accustomed to do in regard to sermons. The want of practice is the principal difficulty. Make it an object always to remember, and be in the habit of going over again in your mind, the principal topics, and you will not be troubled with want of memory.

I should do wrong, however, if I did not here speak a word of comfort to those humble and sincere Christians, whose advantages in early life were not such as to enable them to form any habits of intellectual exertion, and who are, in consequence, subject to a weakness of memory which they have struggled against in vain, and which is a source of constant unhappiness to them. Every thing they hear from the pulpit slips from their minds, even if it have highly moved and delighted them; and they fear that this is a sign

of unprofitableness and sin. To such it may be well to recommend the reply of John Newton to one who came to him sorrowing with the same complaint. "You forget," said he, "what was preached to you. So, too, you forget upon what food you dined a week or a month ago; yet you are none the less sure that you received nourishment from it; and no doubt, also, that your spiritual food nourished you, though you have forgotten in what it consisted. So long as you received it with pleasure and a healthy digestion, and it has kept you a living and growing soul, it can be of no consequence whether you particularly remember it or not."

Finally, preaching, however ineffectual it may often prove, is one of the chief means of grace, and is capable of being made, by every individual, a principal agent in his religious advancement. Let it be so to you. It will be so if you attend on it in a right spirit, and faithfully strive to gain nourishment from it. Do not let it be your shame and guilt, that you sit year after year within hearing of the preacher's voice, and yet are none the better. Do not suffer it to be with yourself, as it is with many, that preaching grows less interesting as they advance. This, it is true, is in part owing to the nature of the mind, which finds a delight in what is new and fresh, which it does not perceive in what has been long familiar. There is a charm in listening to the word preached, when the soul is first awakened to an interest in the concerns of its salvation, and devours every sentence as a hungry man his food, which cannot be fully retained in cooler and maturer years. But if the charm be entirely gone, if the relish be altogether lost, it must be through your own fault. It must be because you have not watched over the tastes and susceptibility of your mind, but have, through neglect, suffered it to become hardened. Be but faithful to yourself, cherish your tenderness of spirit,

take pains to keep alive the ardor and interest of your younger days, and you will find that your feelings will not become wholly dead to the voice of the preacher nor will time and age be able to rob you of this source of your enjoyment. The ancient philosopher, on whom has been well bestowed the title of "Rome's least mortal mind," in writing beautifully of old age, tells us, that the great reason why the faculties of men are impaired in the declining years of a long life, is, that they cease to use and exercise them; and that any man, by continuing vigorously to exert them as in earlier life, may hope to retain them to the last, in something of their original power. The remark may be applied to the old age of the Christian. By faithfully watching over and exercising his feelings and emotions, he may retain them in some good degree of liveliness and vigor to the latest period. And although the zest with which he hung on the ministration of the word, in the first ardor of his youthful faith, may be gone, he will maintain a sober interest, and find a tranquil delight, suited to the serenity of his fading days, and to the peacefulness of the expectation with which he waits the summons to go home.

V. THE LORD'S SUPPER.

This interesting rite is the last in the series of Christian means which I shall mention. It is that to which the young disciple is accustomed to look forward with intense feeling, and the arrival at which constitutes an era in his progress fondly expected and fondly remembered. Sometimes it appears to be regarded too much as the limit of improvement, the goal of the course, the prize of the victory, after which the believer is to sit down and enjoy in security the attainments he has made, exempt from the necessity of further watchfulness and combat. It is owing, in no small degree, to the prevalence of this opinion, that so many make no

actual or perceptible progress after their arrival at the Lord's table. They esteem it less as the means and incitement of greater improvement, than as the end and completion of the work they had undertaken; not so much a refreshment to their weakness in the trying journey of duty, as the festival which rewards its termination. Be on your guard against this erroneous feeling. Habitually remember, that your vigilance and labor are to end only at the grave; that the fight lasts as long as life; that the crown of the victor is "laid up in heaven;" and that whatever indulgences may be granted here, they are but as encouragements to your perseverance and strengtheners to your weakness, designed to cheer and help you on your way; not seasons of repose and enjoyment, but of recollection and preparation; so that they, in fact, form a part of that system of discipline, by which every thing below is made to try and prove the character of man.

In this light you will view the peculiar ordinance of our faith, — as a privilege and indulgence, but also as a pledge and incitement to activity in duty. From the moment that it has been your purpose to become a follower of Christ, you have looked forward to this holy feast as something which it would make you but too blessed to be permitted to partake. While occupied with other means of improvement, you have still felt that there was one thing lacking, and have perhaps been stimulated to a more earnest diligence in the use of them, by the reflection that they would prepare you for this ultimate and superior enjoyment. Such is the very common experience of the growing Christian; and it is my wish to show you how that may be rendered a blessing in the enjoyment, which has been so eagerly desired in the anticipation.

Settle it distinctly in your mind, that this ordinance, so

far as relates to your concern in it, has a twofold purpose; first, to express and manifest your faith in Christ, and your allegiance and attachment to him; secondly, to aid and strengthen you in a faithful adherence to his religion. That is to say, in other words, by your attendance at the Lord's table, you declare yourself to be, from principle and affection, a Christian; and you seek to revive and confirm the sentiments, purposes, and habits, which belong to that character. These are the two objects which the ordinance is intended to accomplish, and which you are to have constantly in view.

By considering the first of these, you will be enabled to decide how soon, and at what period, you ought to offer yourself for this celebration. Can you say that you are in principle and affection a follower of Jesus Christ? This is the question you are to put to yourself; not whether you have been such for a long time; not how great attainments you have made; but are you such at heart, and are you resolved perseveringly to maintain this character? Look at this question. Ponder its meaning. Put it to yourself faithfully. Do nothing with haste or rashness, but proceed calmly and deliberately. Then, if you can conscientiously reply in the affirmative, if you have already showed so much constancy in your efforts, that you may rationally hope to persevere, you may make your profession before men, and take the promised blessing. Hasty minds have sometimes rushed forward too soon, and only exposed their own instability, and brought dishonor on their calling. Be not, therefore, hasty. But timid men have sometimes hesitated too long; have delayed till their ardor cooled, till they fancied they could stand and flourish without any further help, till death or age overtook them, and they were called to meet their Lord without having confessed him before men. Be-

ware, therefore, that you delay not too long. To deliberate whether we shall observe a commandment, after our minds are impressed with a sense of the duty of doing so, is to break it. To postpone our acceptance of a privilege, when we feel that it is such, and know that it is offered to ourselves, is to refuse it, and to forego its benefits. He who believes, and is resolved to live and die in his belief, has a right to this ordinance; he is under his Master's orders to attend it; and he should reflect that obedience, to be acceptable, should be prompt.

As soon, therefore, as your attention to religious things has sufficiently prepared and settled your mind, you will solemnly acknowledge it by this outward testimonial of faith. So far the ordinance looks to the past. It also looks to the future; and you will, secondly, as I said, use it as a salutary means of religious growth, appointed to this end, and singularly suited to accomplish it. You will regard it, and attend it, as one of the appropriate instruments by which you are to keep alive, and carry on to perfection, that principle of spiritual life, which has had birth within you, and which has made a certain progress toward maturity.

It is a means singularly fitted to accomplish this end, because it is an ordinance at once so affecting and so comprehensive; — affecting, by bringing directly before us, in one collected view, the circumstances under which it was instituted, and the purposes of Heaven with which it is connected; — the trials and sufferings of the Son of man, the meekness and sublimity of his submission, the tenderness and pathos of his last conversation and prayers, the desertion in which he was left by his disciples, the insults to which he was exposed from his enemies, the torture in which he died, submissive and forgiving; and all this that he might seal the truth which he had taught, and provide sal-

vation for miserable men. It is true that all this is familiar to the mind, and often brought before it in other acts of worship. But here it forms the express subject of contemplation and prayer. Here it is set before us more evidently and vividly by the circumstances, the forms, the apparatus of the occasion. It is made the special object of regard, and therefore is suited, in a peculiar manner, to affect us.

It has another advantage. It is as comprehensive as it is affecting. In its primitive intention, in its simple purpose, it is, as it was designated by our Lord himself, a commemoration of him: "This do in remembrance of me." And what is it to remember Jesus, rightly and effectually, but to call to mind all that he was, and did, and suffered, in his own person; and all the blessings, advantages, and hopes, which have resulted to us, and shall forever result, from his ministry and death? These are all connected together by one close and indissoluble chain. They are united, in inseparable union, with his name and memory. When we reflect on our Master, our minds cannot pause till they have gone over all his example in life and death, have recalled his character and instructions, have pondered on the excellence and beauty of his truths, the glory of his promises, the bliss of his inheritance. Thence they will pass on to survey the effects which he has already produced on the condition and character of the world, to observe the contrast of our present enviable lot with what it would have been if he had not established his reign among men, and to contemplate the spreading prospects of human felicity in the wider extension of his kingdom; — the removal of error, corruption, ignorance, and sin, and the establishment of universal truth, righteousness, knowledge, and peace. Thence they will pass on to a future world; to the unseen and unimaginable joys of a life in which purity, love, and

happiness, shall be infinite in measure, and infinite in duration, and where man, made the companion of angels, freed from sin and from suffering, shall dwell in the light of God's presence without end. We shall recollect, that for all our hope of acceptance to that world, and of pardon for the sins which have made us unworthy of it; for all those gifts of light and strength which shall prepare us for it; for all the tranquillity, consolation, and support, which, in weakness, sorrow, and death, the knowledge of our immortality imparts, — for these we are indebted to Jesus Christ; without whom we should still have remained ignorant on this first of subjects, and unconsoled in the severest trials. So that, in one word, there is no topic of religion, none of thanksgiving or prayer, none of penitence, gratitude, or hope, none of present or of future felicity for ourselves or for others, which is not called up to the mind by the faithful use of this simple but expressive service. As the believer sits at his Master's table, he seems to himself to be sitting in his presence; together with his image, every blessing of his faith and hope rises brightly to view; and his heart burns within him, as he contemplates the grace with which his unworthy spirit has been visited, and realizes the hope that he shall partake of the glories which his Lord revealed. As he looks unto him, "the Author and Finisher of our faith, who, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame," he grows strong to do and endure likewise; animated by the hope set before him of entering into the joy to which his crucified Master has ascended.

Is it not, then, evident that you have here a means of singular power, to keep the attention awake and the heart right; and that your spirit can hardly slumber, if you faithfully open it to the influences of this observance? Remember, however, that its value will depend on yourself, and the

manner in which you engage in it. It has no mystical charm, no secret and magic power, to bless you against your will. Every thing depends on your own sincerity and devotion. Earnestly desire, and pray, and endeavor that it may do you good, and it will do you good. Go to it heedless, thoughtless, and unprepared, and it will prove to you an idle and inefficient ceremony. The great cause why so many derive no improvement from the repeated performance of the duty is, that they attend it with inconsideration and coldness, and with little purpose or desire of being affected by it. Let your attendance be in a different state of mind. Engage resolutely in the suitable meditations; examine yourself before and after; come to the celebration with a temper prepared for worship, and leave it with one prepared for duty.

There is a peculiar feature in the mode of administering this ordinance, distinguishing it from all other acts of social worship, to which it may be well to advert. I refer to the pauses during its administration, when each worshiper is left to himself, to follow his own reflections, and make his own prayers. There are thus united in the occasion some of the advantages both of social and of private devotion. When you have been excited by the voice of the minister and of general prayer, you are permitted to retire, without interference, into your own heart, to repeat the petitions and confessions with a more close reference to your own case, and to make yourself certain that you understand and feel the service in which you are engaged. You may find a great advantage in these silent intervals. In all other instances of social worship, your attention is required, without ceasing, to some external process; and you pass on from one part of the service to another, with little opportunity to reflect, as you proceed, or to pursue the suggestions which

are made, in the manner that your own peculiar condition may require. But in this, the leisure is given for thoroughly applying to your own personal state all that has met your ear, and for pouring out freely the devotional feeling which has been excited. And if there be any thing favorable to the soul, as multitudes of devout persons have insisted, in occasions for contemplative worship in the presence of other men, then, in this respect, the Lord's supper may claim a superiority over every other season of social devotion.

Many persons, I am aware, find it difficult so to control their minds as to render these silent moments profitable. But to such persons the very difficulty becomes a useful discipline, and the occasion should be valued for the sake of it. To aid them in the use of it, and to prevent its running to waste in miserable listlessness and idle rovings of the mind, it might be well that they should have with them some suitable little book of meditations and reflections, which they may quietly consult in their seats as guides to thought and devotion.

In a word, prepare your mind beforehand, be faithful during the celebration, review it when it is past; and you will never have reason to complain of its inefficacy as a means of religious improvement. You may not enjoy high and mystical raptures; you may be sometimes overtaken with languor and coldness; but as long as, in sincerity and from motives of duty, you present yourself in this way before the Lord, you will find that there is refreshment and encouragement in the act. You will have in it satisfaction, if not ecstasy; and will never doubt that something of the steadfastness of your principle, and of the vigor of your hope, is owing to this affectionate application of the life, example, and sacrifice of the Savior, in the way of his appointment.

CHAPTER V.

THE RELIGIOUS DISCIPLINE OF LIFE.

NEXT to the means to be employed in the promotion of personal religion, we must attend to the oversight and direction of the character in general. The means of which we have taken notice consist of a series of special and stated exercises, whose object is to prepare us for the right conduct of actual life; and they may be compared to the daily drill of the soldier, by which he is made ready for the field. Watchfulness and self-discipline belong to all times and occasions, and may be compared to the actual use which the soldier makes of his preparation in the camp and the field. The Christian is engaged occasionally in prayer, meditation, study, and the communion; he must watch and govern himself always. To the former duties he devotes certain appropriate seasons; the latter belong to every season and all hours. The former constitute his preparation for the Christian life; the latter constitute its pervading spirit. No punctuality or fidelity in the former proves a man to be religious without the latter. And therefore, having stated the manner in which these means are to be used, it is necessary for us to go on and show how they are to affect the whole conduct of life, and make it an exercise of perpetual self-discipline.

Why you are to be always watchful over yourself is easily perceived. In this world of sensible objects and temporal pursuits, you are constantly exposed to have your thoughts absorbed by surrounding things, and withdrawn from the spiritual objects to which they should be primarily attached. You are incited to forget them, to slight them, to counteract

them. The engagements, the anxiety, hurry, and pleasures of life, thrust them from your thoughts; and desires, propensities, passions, are excited quite inconsistent with the calm and heavenward affections of Christ. All these tendencies in your situation are to be resisted. You are to be ever on the alert, that they may not lead you into any course of thought or of action at variance with the principles to which you are pledged as a believer in Jesus Christ, and which form your delight in your hours of devotional enjoyment. Such inconsistency may be sometimes witnessed. But what can be more melancholy than to see a rational being, deeply convinced of the truths of religion, in his sober hours of thought dwelling on them with fond and delighted contemplation, excited by them to a devout ardor of communion with God, and sometimes to a glow of holy rapture which seems to belong to a superior nature; and then sinking into worldliness, governing himself, in ordinary life, by selfish maxims of temporal interest, obeying the passions and propensities of his animal being, and, in a word, living precisely as he would do, did he believe that there is nothing higher or better than this poor life? I ask, what can be more sad or pitiable than such a spectacle? Let it be your earnest care to guard against so deplorable an inconsistency. Now, while your mind is warm with its early interest in divine things, — now, while they press upon you in all their freshness, — now, take heed that you do not concentrate that interest, and use all its strength, in the luxury of devout musing, or the excitements of study and devotion; but carry it into your whole life; let it be always present to you in all you do, in all you say; let it form your habitual state of feeling, your customary frame of mind and temper. Make it your constant study that nothing shall be inconsistent with it, but every thing partake of its power.

This is the watchfulness in which you must live. This is the purpose for which you must exercise over yourself an unremitting and ever-wakeful discipline; seeing to it, like some magistrate over a city, or some commander over an army, that all your thoughts, dispositions, words, and actions be subject to the law of God, and the principles of the Christian faith.

Thus it is plain that your chief business, as well as your great trial, in forming a Christian character, lies in the ordinary tenor of life. The WORLD is the theatre on which you are to prove yourself a Christian. It is in the occurrences of every day, in the relations of every hour, in your affairs, in your family, in your conversation with those around you, in your treatment of them, and your reception of their treatment, — it is in these that you are to cultivate and perfect the character of a child of God. It is in these that your passions are exercised, and your government of them proved; in these that your command over that unruly member, the tongue, is made known; in these that temptations to wrong-doing and evil-speaking beset you, and that you are to apply your religious principle in resisting them. In these it is, consequently, that you discover whether your principle is real and genuine, or whether it lies only in feeling and in words. In the quiet of your chamber, in the devout solitude of your closet, when the world is shut out, and your solemnized spirit feels itself alone with God, you may be so exalted by communion with Heaven, and by meditation on heavenly truth, that all things earthly shall seem worthless and paltry, and every desire be set upon things above. How often, at such times, does it appear as if the world had no longer any charms, as if its pleasures and pomp could never again entice or delight us! Our souls are above them. We have no more relish for them than

have the angels. And if this were all which is required of us, if nothing opposed to this delightful frame of mind were ever to cross our path, the Christian prize would be already won. But, alas! in the closet, and in the third heaven of contemplation, we can live but a small portion of the time. We must come down from the mount. We must enter the crowd and distractions of common life. We must engage in common and secular affairs. And there, how much do we encounter that is opposed to the calm and serene spirit of our contemplative hours! how much to irritate and disturb our quiet self-possession! how much to drive from our thoughts the subjects on which we have been musing! how much to revive the relish for transient pleasures and worldly enjoyments, and a love for the things which minister gratification to pride and to the senses! In the midst of these things, dangerous, enticing, seductive, you are to live and walk unchanged, unseduced, undefiled; your heart true to its Master, your spirit firm in its allegiance to God, and your soul as truly devout and humble as when worshiping at the altar. Is this easy? I will not ask; but, Is it not your great, your paramount trial? Is it not here that the very battle of your soul's salvation is to be fought? Is not this, as I said, the very field of actual and decisive war, the very seat of the fearful and final campaign? And the prayers, and studies, and observances of your more special devotion, are they not the buckling on of the armor, and the refreshing and preparing of the soul for its real combat?

You perceive, then, how the Christian life must consist in watchfulness and self-discipline; how it must be your great business to keep a faithful guard over yourself, that, both in mind and conduct, nothing may exist contrary to the spirit and precepts of Jesus Christ.

First of all, this guard is to be placed upon the mind. It

is an intellectual, internal, spiritual discipline; the oversight and management of the thoughts and affections.

There is a superficial religion, not unpopular in the world, which is limited to the outward conduct and the external relations of life; which is made to consist exclusively in rectitude of behavior and uprightness of dealing. Into this error you are not likely to fall, if you learn your religion from the New Testament; and I should not have thought it needful to warn you against it, had it not been so prevalent. Nothing but its commonness could render it credible, that men, who possess the Scriptures, and fancy they understand them, or who are simply capable of observation on the nature of man and of happiness, should persuade themselves that the character which God demands and will bless, is independent of the state of the mind and the frame of the affections. Is it not the mind which constitutes the man? Is it not the mind which gives its moral complexion to the conduct? Is it not certain that the same conduct which we applaud as indicating an upright character, we should disapprove and condemn, on discovering that it proceeded from base and improper motives? So that even *men* judge of character rather by the principle which actuates, than by the actions themselves. How much more completely would this be the case, if, instead of being obliged to infer the principle from the act, they could discern the principle itself, as it lies in the mind of the agent! Who, in that case, would ever judge a man by his actions alone? Who would not always decide respecting his character from the principles and motives which guided him, — his thoughts, dispositions, and habitual temper? And thus it is that the Deity judges and decides. He looks not on the outward appearance, but on the heart. Consequently, how obvious is the position, that, in seeking the Christian

character, the first and most diligent watch must be placed over the inner man! "Keep thy HEART with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

This implies several things. First, a careful guard over the thoughts. It is in the heedless disregard of the thoughts that corruption often takes its rise. They are suffered to wander without restraint, to attach themselves without check to any objects which attract the senses, or are suggested in conversation, and to rove uncontrolled from one end of the world to another. How many hours are thus wasted in unprofitable musing, which leaves no impression behind! How much of life is made an absolute blank! Worse still, how often do sinful fancies, sensual images, unlawful desires, take advantage of this negligence to insinuate themselves into the mind, and make to themselves a home there, polluting the chambers of the soul, and rendering purity unwelcome! This is the beginning of evil with many a one, who, from this want of vigilance over the course of his thoughts, has surrendered himself to frivolity and sensuality, without being aware that he was in peril. Thoughtlessness, mere thoughtlessness, has left the door open to sin, and the same thoughtlessness prevents the detection of the intruder.

You may fancy that your present preference for profitable subjects of thought is such that you are in no danger from this source. But beware of trusting to any present disposition. If you become confident, you will fall; and the rather because the beginning of this peril is so subtle and sly. Believe that the danger is real and imminent, or it is scarcely possible that you should not suffer from it. You may not, indeed, fall a victim to irregular desires and hurtful immoralities; but the habit of unwatched thought will weaken your control over your mind, will diminish your

power of self-government, and rob you of that vigorous self-possession, alive to every occasion, and prompt at every call, which forms the decision of character that ought to belong to him who professes to follow the energetic principles of Christian morality. So that, if you would be saved from an unbecoming weakness of mind, and its possible, not to say probable, consequences, — ungoverned desires and passions, — keep a guard upon your thoughts. Let your morning and evening prayer be, that you may live thoughtfully. And when, in the business of the day, your hands are occupied, but your mind free to think, keep yourself attentive to your thoughts. Inquire frequently how they are engaged. Direct them to useful and innocent subjects. Think over the books you have been reading; rehearse to yourself the knowledge you have gained; call up the sermons you have heard; repeat the passages of Scripture you know. By methods like these, take care that even your empty hours minister to your improvement. Paley has truly observed, that every man has some favorite subject, to which his mind spontaneously turns at every interval of leisure; and that with the devout man the subject is God. Hence the watching over your thoughts furnishes you with a ready test of your religious condition; it exposes to you the first and faintest symptoms of religious decline, and enables you to apply an immediate remedy.

If the thoughts, which may be expressed in words, are to be thus guarded, the temper and feelings, which are often so indefinable in language, require a no less anxious guardianship. In the perplexities and trials of daily life, in the conflict with the various tempers and frequently perverse dispositions of those around us, in the little crosses, the petty disappointments, the trifling ills which are our perpetual lot, we are exposed to lose that calm equanimity of mind

which the Christian should habitually possess. We are liable to be ruffled and irritated, and to feel and display another spirit than that gentleness which "bears all things and is not easily provoked." The selfishness of some, the obstinacy of others, the pride of our neighbor, the heedlessness of our children, and the unfaithfulness of our dependants, tire our patience, and disturb our self-possession; while bodily infirmity and disordered nerves magnify insignificant inconveniences into serious evils, and irritate to peevishness and discontent the temper which duty calls to cheerfulness and submission. Some are blessed with a native quietness of temperament which hardly feels these hourly vexations. But of some they form the great trial and peculiar cross; they can bear any thing better. And to all persons they constitute an exposure full of hazard, and demanding cautious vigilance. The very spirit and essential traits of the Christian character require watchfulness against them, and imply conquest over them. The humility, meekness, forbearance, gentleness, and love of peace; the long-suffering, the patience, the serenity, which form so lovely a combination, which portray a character that no one can fail to admire and love; — these are to be maintained only by much and persevering watchfulness.

Without this, the most equable disposition by nature may become irritable and unhappy. With it, under the authority and guidance of Christian faith, the most unfortunate natural temper is subdued to the gentleness of the lamb. Without it, the internal condition of man is restless, rebellious, full of wretchedness, having no peace in itself, and enjoying nothing around. With it, the aspect of the world becomes changed; every thing is bearable, if not pleasant; the sweet light which beams within shines on all without, making pleasant the aspect of all men, and smoothing the

roughnesses of all affairs. Who does not know how much the events of life take their hue from the state of the disposition? To the proud, suspicious, and jealous, every man seems an intruder, every gesture an insult, and every event a cause of vexation and wrath. To the self-governed and amiable, every thing is tolerable, and he feels nothing of the inconveniences which make the misery of the other. One's happiness, therefore, as well as duty, requires this control of the disposition. And when the Savior pronounced his benediction on the pure, peaceful, humble-minded, and meek, he taught, not only the great requisite of his spiritual kingdom, but the great secret of human felicity.

When the frame of your mind is thus a constant care, you will find little difficulty in the control of the appetites. These things are connected together; and, an ascendency over the former being secured, the subjection of the latter easily follows. But take good heed that it does follow. Do not be thoughtless about it, because you fancy that it will of course accompany a regulated mind. Otherwise it is here that corruption may begin. The enemy will enter at any place, however improbable, which shall be left unguarded. And it only needs that the body become disordered through the immoderate indulgence of the appetites, to raise a rebellion throughout the whole moral system; or, to speak more plainly, this indulgence will create cloudiness of mind, indisposition to thought, activity, and duty, irritability of temper, sluggishness of devotional feeling, and at length a general spiritual lethargy. There can be little doubt that much of our dulness of apprehension and deadness of feeling on spiritual topics, as well as our strange sensibility to minor trials, is owing to a derangement of the animal economy, which is again owing to want of modera-

tion in gratifying our animal desires. Hence there was some reason in the abstinence and fastings of religious men in ancient times; and if we valued sufficiently, what they, perhaps, valued superstitiously, — serenity and brightness of mind, an equal temper, and a perpetual aptitude for spiritual contemplation, — we should imitate them more, if not in their fastings, yet certainly in their temperance. At any rate, "let your moderation be known unto all men." For temperance is not only the observance of an express injunction, but is essential to that quietness and self-control which should mark the religious character.

The next exercise of self-discipline will be in conversation. Conversation, while it is a chief source of improvement and pleasure, is also a scene of peculiar trial, and the occasion of much sin. One might suppose that few persons ever dream that they are accountable for what passes in conversation, although there is no point of ordinary life which Jesus and the apostles have more frequently and sternly put under the control of religious principle. Their language is strikingly urgent on this head; and yet, so little scrupulousness is there among men, even religious men, that it would seem as if they felt ashamed to be careful in their talk. A thoroughly well-governed speech is so rare, that we still say, in the words of James, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a *perfect* man."

Do not allow yourself to be off your guard in this respect. Make it a part of your business, by a cautious prudence, to have your speech consistent with the rest of your character. Do not flatter yourself that your thoughts are under due control, your desires properly regulated, or your dispositions subject as they should be to Christian principle, if your intercourse with others consists mainly of frivolous gossip, impertinent anecdotes, speculations on the character

and affairs of your neighbors, the repetition of former conversations, or a discussion of the current petty scandal of society; much less, if you allow yourself in careless exaggeration on all these points, and that grievous inattention to exact truth which is apt to attend the statements of those whose conversation is made up of these materials. Give no countenance to this lamentable departure from charity and veracity, which it is mortifying to observe commonly marks the every-day gossip of the world. Let precision in every statement distinguish what you say, remembering that a little lie, or a little uncharitableness, is no better than a little theft. Be slow to speak those reports to another's disadvantage, which find so ready a circulation and are so eagerly believed, though every day's experience shows us that a large proportion of them are unfounded and false. In a word, be convinced that levity, uncharitableness, and falsehood, are as truly immoral and irreligious in the common intercourse of life, as on its more solemn occasions; that idle and injurious words make a part of man's responsible character, as really as blasphemy and idolatry; and that "if any man seem to be religious, and bridle not his tongue, that man's religion is vain."

"A word spoken in season, how good it is!" Why should you not do all in your power to elevate the tone of conversation, and render the intercourse of man with man more rational and profitable? Let your example of cheerful, innocent, blameless words, in which neither folly nor austerity shall find place, exhibit the uprightness and purity of a mind controlled by habitual principle, and be a recommendation of the religion you profess. Let the authority of that faith, to which you subject every other department of your character, be extended to those moments, not the least important, in which you exercise the peculiar capacity of a

rational being in the interchange of thought. Never let it be said of your tongue, which Watts has truly called "the glory of our frame," that with it you bless God, and at the same time make its habitual carelessness a curse to *men*, who are formed in the similitude of God.

The influence of the principle which rules within should thus be seen in all your deportment and intercourse, on every occasion and in every relation. Your outward life should be but the manifestation and expression of the temper which prevails within, the acting out of the sentiments which abide there; so that all who see you may understand, without your saying it in words, how supreme with you is the authority of conscience, how reverent your attachment to truth, how sacred your adherence to duty; how full of good-will to men, and how devoutly submissive to God, the habitual tenor of your mind. Your spontaneous, unconstrained action, flowing without effort from your feelings, amid the events of every day, should be the unavoidable expression of a spirit imbued with high and heaven-ward desires; so that, as in the case of the apostles, those who saw them "took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus," it may, in like manner, be obvious that you have learned of that holy Teacher. And this may be without any obtrusive display on your part, without asking for observation, without either saying or hinting, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord." The reign of a good principle in the soul carries its own evidence in the life, just as that of a good government is visible on the face of society. A man of a disinterested and pious mind bears the signature of it in his whole deportment. His Lord's mark is on his forehead. We may say of his inward principle, which an apostle has called "Christ formed within us," as was said of Christ himself during his beneficent ministry, — it "can-

not be hid." There is an atmosphere of excellence about such a man, which gives savor of his goodness to all who approach, and through which the internal light of his soul beams out upon all observers. Consequently, if you allow yourself in a deportment inconsistent with Christian uprightness, propriety, and charity, you are guilty of bringing contradiction and disgrace on the principles which you profess; you expose yourself to the charge of hypocritically maintaining truths to which you do not conform yourself. You dishonor your religion by causing it to appear unequal to that dominion over the human character which it claims to exert. All men know that, if "the salvation reigned within," it would regulate the movements of the life as surely as the internal motions of the watch are indicated on its face; if the hands point wrong, they know, without looking further, that there is disorder within. That disorder they will attribute either to the incapacity of the principle, or to your unfaithfulness in applying it. But what is of far greater importance, the holy and unerring judgment of God will ascribe it to the single cause of your own unfaithfulness; and for all your wanderings from Christian constancy, and all the consequent dishonor to the Christian name, you must bear the shame and reproach in the final day of account.

You perceive how urgent is the call for perpetual watchfulness and rigid self-discipline. It is not easy, with much intentional guard over yourself, to keep the spirit habitually right in this giddy and tempting world; and it is equally difficult to maintain a perfect coincidence between the principle within and the deportment of daily life. Oftentimes, in the emergencies and hurry of business, pleasure, and society, where many things concur to drown the voice of the spirit within, we find the lower propensities of our na-

ture gaining an ascendency, and the law in our members rising in rebellion against the law in our mind. "The things that we would, we do not, and the things that we would not, those we do;" and sense and passion triumph, for the moment, over reason and faith. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other." And how shall we gain the victory in this perpetual contest? "Through our Lord Jesus Christ," says the apostle; and the means thereto are found in his injunction, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Vigilance over every hour and in every engagement, carrying into them the shield of faith and the whole armor of God; and prayer, without ceasing, that your soul may be strong to wield them; — these will secure to you the victory. Sometimes you will find yourself in perplexities and straits, sometimes faltering and irresolute; but never forsaken or cast down, never exposed to temptation which you are unable to bear, or from which there is no way of escape. You may "do all things through Christ who strengtheneth you."

I have thus spoken of that religious discipline of daily life, in which the Christian character is formed and tried. It will be sufficient to add, in conclusion, that your great concern must be with two things, — your principles and your habits.

First, you must constantly have an eye to your principles. Take care that they be kept pure, and that you abide by them. They have been well compared to the compass of the ship, on which if the helmsman keeps a faithful eye, and resolutely steers by it in spite of the opposition of winds and waves, he will find the way to his port; but by heedless inattention to it, he is sure to go astray, and be blown whither he would not. Be assured that it is only by adher-

ence to principle, in resolute defiance of inclination, opposition, present interest, and worldly solicitation, that you can insure the steady progress of your soul, and its final arrival in heaven. Neglect it, and you are at the mercy of circumstances, tossed helpless on the waters of chance, exposed to the buffetings of temptation without the power of resistance, and a sure prey of the destroyer. You must find your safety in the strength of your principle; and that strength lies in the original power of conscience, and the added authority of the divine word. Herein is the "still small voice" of Heaven; and he that will "cover his face" from the world, and obediently listen to it, may become morally omnipotent.

Secondly, have an eye to your habits. Add to the authority of principle the vigor and steadfastness of confirmed habit, and your religious character becomes almost impregnable to assault. It is in no danger of overthrow, except from the most cunning assailants in a season of your most culpable negligence. What wisdom and kindness has the Creator displayed in our constitution, that we are able to rear around our virtue the strong bulwark of habit! It is a defence of the weakest spirit against the strongest trial. Through the power of habits early formed, how many have stood in exposed places, and been unaffected by solicitations to sin, beneath which others have fallen, who trusted to their good purposes, but who had never confirmed and invigorated them in action! How often, for example, has the young man from a retired situation — educated in the bosom of a virtuous family, and under the eye of a watchful father, thence sent forth to the new scenes of a city life, under the protection of good principles and a sincere purpose to do well — been found weak and wanting in the exposure; and been carried away headlong by the tide of

temptation, because his early habits were suited only for seclusion, and his principles were guarded by none which could secure them against the novel assaults that were made upon them! While, on the other hand, young men brought up in the midst of these solicitations to sin, with far less inculcation of principle, are oftentimes enabled, through the mere strength which habit imparts, to resist them all, and live in the midst of them as if they were not. It cannot be necessary to multiply examples. You well know what a slave man is to his habitual indulgences, and how the customary routine of his life and methods of employment tyrannize over him, and how frequently one strives in vain to free himself from their dominion. The old proverb is every day verified before you, of the skin of the Ethiopian and the spots of the leopard. But, if thus powerful for evil, habit is no less powerful for good. If in some cases it be stronger than principle, and defy all the expostulations of religion, even when the miserable man is convinced that his safety lies in breaking from it, — then, when enlisted as the ally of principle, when coupled with faith, and made the fellow-worker of piety, how unspeakable may be its aid toward the security and permanence of virtue!

Take heed, therefore, to your habits. Allow yourself to form none but such as are innocent, and such as may help your efforts to do well. In the arrangement of your business, in the methods of your household and family, in the disposal of your time, in the choice, seasons, and mode of your recreation, in your love of company, and your selection of books, — in these preserve a simple and blameless taste. Do not allow any of them to be such as shall offer an obstacle to serious thought, and induce a state of feeling indisposed to religious exercises. Especially do not allow them so to enter the frame and texture of your life, that

every effort of virtue and devotion shall be a pitched battle with some cherished inclination or sturdy habit. This is to increase most unwisely and needlessly the trials and perils of a religious course. It is to raise up for yourself obstacles and difficulties beyond those which properly belong to your situation. Rather, therefore, arrange every thing in your customary pursuits and indulgences to favor the grand end of your being; so that every act of piety and faith shall be coincident with it; so that little or no effort shall be required to maintain the steady order of daily duty; and, instead of an opposition, a struggle, a contest, whenever principle asserts its claims, you shall find the ready consent and hearty coöperation of all the habitual preferences, tastes, and occupations, of your life. He in whom this is so is the happy man. He is the consistent man. He is the man to be congratulated, to be admired, to be imitated. Universal harmony reigns within him; no oppositions, no jarring contentions, mar his peace. With him, the flesh and the spirit are no longer contrary, the one to the other. His duty and his inclination are one. There is no dispute between what he ought to do and what he wishes to do. But, with one consenting voice, heart and life move on harmoniously, accustomed to and loving the same things. To him the yoke is indeed easy, and the burden light. To him heaven is already begun; and when, at last, he shall be welcomed to the joy of his Lord, it will be to a joy which his regulated spirit has already tasted in the labors and pleasures of obedience below.

PROGRESS

OF THE

CHRISTIAN LIFE.

ADVERTISEMENT.

At the period when Mr. Ware's health began irrecoverably to fail, and just before he was obliged to give up all occupation, he was devoting his hours of leisure to the preparation of a sequel to his work on the Formation of the Christian Character, which he designed to entitle "Progress of the Christian Life." Several chapters only were finished. They are too valuable to be lost, and are here published in the hope that they may be useful. The reader will form by them an idea of what the sequel would have been if its author had lived to finish it.

C. R.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THE following pages are designed as a sequel to the little work on the Formation of the Christian Character, and are supposed to be addressed to the same persons. When one has adopted the Christian faith as his rule of life, and begun in earnest his religious existence, it is still but the commencement of a career in which an indefinite progress is to be made, and which is to continue forever. As long as man is imperfect, there is room for improvement. As long as he is in the flesh, there is occasion for watchfulness and struggling against temptation. There is need that his principles become more and more fixed, his conscience more and more enlightened and controlling, his passions more thoroughly obedient to the law of righteousness, and his whole temper and demeanor more steadfastly conformed to the example of Christ. In a word, he is to *grow* in grace. Advancement is his duty, perfection his aim.

It is with regard to this duty of religious progress that I propose to offer a few hints. There are some errors respecting it prevalent among believers, which I would first attempt to rectify; and then I would explain its true nature and character, remove discouragements, and show the means and steps by which it should proceed, and how actual success is to be ascertained.

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PROGRESS

OF THE

CHRISTIAN LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

ERRORS RESPECTING THE DUTY OF RELIGIOUS PROGRESS NOTICED AND CORRECTED — ESPECIALLY THE ERROR THAT THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, HAVING BEEN BEGUN, IS ACCOMPLISHED.

NOTHING can be plainer than that the Christian character is a thing to be *acquired* and to be *improved;* yet it is evident that many do not so regard it. If we may judge from their conduct, the number is not small of those who esteem it something which belongs to them just as the body does, and to be kept alive and in health just like that, by living along from day to day, as the circumstances of each day may suggest, but not to be the subject of any special regard. But as to being every day better than the day before, as to being more humble and charitable this year than they were last, it does not enter their mind, it makes no part of their plan. They have been Christians, they say, as long as they can remember; they always believed in the gospel, and meant to do their duty. But they do not know more about the history and founda-

tion, the nature and purposes, of their religion, nor are they in any respect more devoted. Indeed, when one thinks seriously on the subject, it is a matter of amazement to him to observe how stationary good men are, and how quietly they content themselves with being so.

It is not so in other matters. We look around us on the community, and we see it in a state of commotion and advancement. Its prosperity is a wonder to us: and that prosperity is progress. Every one is pushing forward. Every one is eager and panting for success. Our young men rise step by step; they are discontented if they find it otherwise. Those who began life with nothing are seen in a few years comfortably living with a family around them, — then entering a larger dwelling, supporting a more extensive establishment, and in various expenses evincing the advancement they have made. This is common. But meantime — even if they account themselves Christians, and remember that they have an eternity as well as a family to provide for — they have not dreamed of exhibiting any proportionate advancement of character; it has not occurred to them that their piety should have grown with their estate; that their charities should have been as much greater than formerly as their income has become larger; that, as they have been rising in the world, they should have risen also toward heaven. In the eye of the world, they are better dressed and better lodged, and they move in a more fashionable and intellectual circle; but in the eye of God, in their preparation for heaven, they are just where they were. They have contrived to give the soul just food enough to keep it of the same stature — not considering that it was to grow as well as the body — not considering, indeed, that this eager attention to worldly good, and rapid growth in earthly prosperity, have very probably stunted the growth of their characters.

How salutary might it prove to every one whom Providence has blessed with an increase of goods, if, at every enlargement of his style of living, he should devote one day to searching into his spiritual progress, and resolve never to erect a new house, or introduce a higher indulgence to his domestic economy, until he could honestly say, that he was as much improved in character as in fortune!

But, alas! this is far from being the way of the world. They are satisfied to seem to themselves no worse than they were; — if they deeply examined themselves, they might discover that they are, in fact, much worse.

Amid this universal and earnest struggle for the outside life, the inner life is neglected; and very good men are entirely content to be no better, who could ill brook to be no richer.

Certainly this indicates a false idea of the true object of life, and a very imperfect acquaintance with that religion which they profess to have taken for their guide. I do not treat the question in its reference to mere men of the world. On their principles they are right. With a worldly man, character is of very little consequence. If he be not dishonest, so as to be in danger of the law, — if he keep a decent reputation for fairness and the social virtues, so as not to hinder his success by becoming obnoxious to others, — what more can he need? His business is to make his fortune and enjoy himself more and more every year; and this he can do perfectly well without being a better man. This, therefore, need be no part of his concern. But with those who profess to look beyond the world, to whom the favor of God is of some consequence, as well as the opinion of men, and who soberly believe that virtue is better than wealth, — with such as I am now addressing, — it should be the chief concern. Is it possible that they can have adopted Christ as

their Master, and taken his religion as the great guide and blessing of their souls, knowing themselves to be immortal, and yet be satisfied to see their earthly condition prosperous while there are no signs of their souls' prosperity? Surely the last must be their great anxiety and care, or they are strangely false to their principles. There is no incompatibility between the two; both may advance together; but to strive only for the earthly is treachery to their principles. Alas! then, how many such traitors are there!

But there is another class. All do not, even in this prosperous community, succeed in their anxious efforts to advance themselves in the world. Many make no progress. They gain no wealth, they never enlarge their means of living and enjoyment, they live on as they began. Perhaps they are content with their lot. Many, it is well known, are perfectly so. They acquiesce in the allotment of Providence, and quietly sit down where God has appointed them. But many more have tried to rise, and in vain. Are they satisfied then? Do they content themselves? Do they make no effort further? Do they feel no regret, mortification, and longing? Surely not so. Waking and dreaming, they are haunted by the restless desire and the unquenched hope of reinstating their fortunes. And yet, though they know that their souls are equally far from prosperity, and that they have made no improvement in religious knowledge and virtue, it does not make them uneasy; they are perfectly willing it should be so. They are quite content to find themselves no better Christians; but they cannot bear to find themselves no more wealthy.

It was a beautiful wish of the disciple whom Jesus loved, when writing to a dear friend, "that he might be in health and prosper *even as his soul prospered.*" I fear it would be thought a strange wish now, even amongst those who esteem

themselves very good disciples. They would not understand how the prosperity of the soul is the first thing. Many, it is to be feared, do not even place it second. Business, money-getting, is first; their family, second; religion is postponed to the third place, at least, and very little honored in that, if we may judge by its advancement in comparison with that of the other two.

There are undoubtedly other classes to be found, besides those whom I have now named. They need not be described. They leave but a small number to be found scattered among us, here and there, as we look around, whose business, aim, object, is the growth of their character, who live for the sake of the soul, and who evidently, markedly, become better men as they advance in life. We would not be cynical in our estimate, but none can look around on society, Christian society, — recollecting with what capacities for goodness men have been endowed, and what inducements to progress toward perfection are always before them, — without a feeling of amazement, mortification, and alarm, at observing how few are growing, or striving to grow, in the virtues of the Christian life. So rare are such instances, that they are looked on, and spoken of, as bright exceptions; and a measure of goodness which ought to be that of every man, nay, which all acknowledge to be still far short of what the Christian should be, is described, praised, and held forth to imitation as something extraordinary — as, indeed, beyond what men in general are expected to attain. "We are not to *expect* to find others as good as he."

This defective tone and condition of society is unquestionably a great hinderance to those who are young in religion. It presents to them, on their first entrance to a new principle, instead of examples that stimulate to effort and excellence, and raise still higher their impressions of the

purity and spirituality of Christian attainment, specimens of lagging, sluggish, moderate virtue, which countenance them in the most indolent exertions for improvement. As they look forward with the glowing mind of youth and the first beatings of awakened faith, the Christian life looks to them not only all light and glorious, but of a strict and holy austerity, and a scrupulous purity which has no part or lot with the ordinary follies of humanity — elevated above the world by a taste which has no pleasure in its perishing pursuits, and a habit of exalted contemplation which dwells amid things unseen and eternal. They begin the race, therefore, with feelings of high aspiration. They take their place among the disciples with a romantic and earnest expectation of finding in those privileged persons something, they know not what, of a celestial temper and beauty: they expect to be incited, cheered, instructed, by the very contact, and to find in the atmosphere in which they dwell the radiance and perfume of heaven. And if they could find it so, they would keep alive their own ardor, they would persevere to realize their own exalted conceptions. But they find it otherwise. The image which they had conceived in their own minds of what the Christian man ought to be — an image whose features were all drawn from the life and teaching of the Great Master — is not at all realized in the world. Nobody acts up to it. Nobody seems to have it in mind. The common standard is wholly below it; and these young beginners find themselves alone, with an idea and purpose of a perfection which the more experienced smile upon as the extravagant dream of youth, which a few more days will show them to be impracticable in such a world as this. Thus the actual state of religious feeling chills the early blossoms of their religious characters; they find that much less than they had imagined is thought sufficient by

the older and wiser disciples, who must know much better than themselves; that it is by no means requisite to follow Christ so nearly, or worship God so exclusively, as they had fancied; they discover that, in fact, they have made as great attainments already as the world would bear; to proceed further would be only to become singular: so they change their purpose, and remain where they are; unwilling to be better than others; satisfied with a measure which seems to satisfy others, and glad to learn that the great work they had undertaken is so early completed. And thus each generation does its utmost to repress the aspiration of the next, and to keep down the standard of virtuous attainment.

So powerful is the example of the society around us, and such the influence of prevailing notions to modify our own, that few have courage or perseverance to follow the inward suggestion which urges them to rise higher. So that a distinguished minister gave it as his earnest advice to a young friend, not to allow himself to be ordained as pastor of any church in which the standard of life was not very strict and high; because, as he urged, all experience shows how almost impossible it is for a young minister to escape conforming himself to the sentiment around him, and being shaped more or less by the popular mould. If it be thus to be apprehended in the case of one all whose *temporal* interests urge him, no less than his *eternal*, to rise to the MARK, how much more must it be so with ordinary men, who are less protected by the circumstances of their position, and the daily duties of their calling.

It is, therefore, evidently, one of the first duties of the young Christian to settle it in his mind that he has only commenced a work which is to be going on as long as he shall exist. Every thing in the example and experience of others around him proves how necessary this is, for it proves how easily he may be made to forget it.

There are also some mistaken notions respecting religion itself which may lead to the same error; the idea, namely, which so readily finds a welcome in the mind which is glowing with the first happiness of its early faith, that its glow cannot fade away; that things will always appear to the soul just as they do at that divine moment; that the new taste is fixed, and cannot be changed; that it will take care of itself. Hazardous and unfounded as such a feeling is, it is yet very natural. It belongs to all strong emotion to have faith in its own perpetuity. The affections always are confident that they never shall change; and we always fancy that the grief, or love, or indignation, which fills our bosoms now, can never fade from them. When, therefore, we are awake to the vivid consciousness of our spiritual relations, and are overwhelmed with those various and mingling emotions that take possession of the excited spirit, and blend there in all that is awful, tender, joyous, and serene — when we are confident that now, at last, we are tasting the highest gratification of which human nature is capable, that now, at last, we are in the state in which man ought to be, — a state in which things appear as they are, in their true relations and proportions, and the common things of the world take rank among the insignificant and uninteresting, — we cannot doubt that these, the truest, will be the lasting feelings; we cannot conceive it possible that any thing on earth should ever have charm enough to entice from this state; that any of the things which we now know to be inferior should ever be able to withdraw us from what we now know to be supreme. This is the hearty, honest, deeply-seated conviction within us. This is the conviction which occasions the well-known confidence and presumption of young converts, which prompts to their proverbial forwardness — a confidence and forwardness often attributed to un-

worthy motives, and spoken of to their discredit. It may not be creditable to them; yet it argues nothing worse, perhaps, than self-ignorance. They do not know the evanescent character of the feelings, the deceitfulness of the heart; therefore they give way to it; they trust themselves; they spread all their sails to the wind, as if it would never change; they fancy themselves established, and act warmly and boldly, as if established. But this glow is necessarily transient, like all vehement feeling; and when it has passed away, they have no abiding principle of life to take its place and keep the work in progress. Other feelings rise up in the midst of the world; the brightness of the spiritual light fades from before the eye of the soul, and there is no advancement to a higher perfection.

Let no one, therefore, from the strength and security of his first affections, allow himself to rest, as if the work were done. It is but begun. Let him settle within himself, deeply and sternly, the persuasion that it is to be going on while life lasts. For want of this it is that the love of so many has waxed cold, and that so many who put their hand to the plough have turned back. If you would persevere, you must understand, at the outset, the necessity of perseverance. You must start with the conviction that you begin a perpetual progress.

For which reason, instead of looking at the state of society, instead of conforming yourself to the model of those with whom you live, study into the nature and capacity of your soul, your destiny, and your responsibility; imbue your mind with the spirit of your immortal faith, and the influence of the character of your holy Master; and from the promptings of a soul thus filled and kindled, act out Christianity for yourself; — not as others do, nor as others expect you to do, but as this state of mind impels you.

There is no true and safe course but to be obedient to these suggestions of a mind which has faithfully studied for itself into the doctrine and temper of the divine life. These suggestions are to it as the instinct of its immortal nature — as unerring, as safe, as the instincts of the lower orders of beings. Man's bodily instincts are as nothing, for his bodily interests are of little moment, and in pursuing them he has no need of an infallible guide. But the interests of his undying soul are of infinite consequence: in his search for them he needs an infallible guide; and that guide he has in the promptings of his own mind, whenever he has cultivated it with the deep study of truth and faith, and steeped it by faithful contemplation in the secrets of divine love and infinite purity, and brought it into intimate communion with the Holy Spirit of God. If you have truly acquainted yourself with your Master and his revelation, — if you have entered into their spirit with your whole soul, — then act yourself, freely, boldly, and you will not know what it is to stop short. This very action will be progress.

CHAPTER II.

ERRORS NOTICED AND CORRECTED, ESPECIALLY THE ERROR THAT THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS NOT TO BE TAKEN UP EXPRESSLY — IS NOT TO HAVE A MARKED COMMENCEMENT.

Besides the causes of error which are hinted at in the preceding chapter, there are others still more worthy of consideration. Of these I do not know that there is any

more common or more detrimental than that which is the subject of this chapter. It is an error which arises naturally from the circumstances of birth and education in a Christian land, and from the idea that under such circumstances the Christian character grows up of course, just as the social does, and perhaps as part of the social. It differs from that before mentioned in this, that, while that supposed the Christian character something to be formed by a certain process in a certain time, — to be done by the job and finished at once, — this supposes that it is never any thing to be taken up as a distinct subject of attention, or to be made an express concern; but is to be left to take care of itself, under those influences to which all are subjected, and beneath which it will grow up spontaneously. This is a common error; it infects the great mass of nominal Christians; it deceives and paralyzes even conscientious men, and keeps them from all progress by persuading them that the soul will grow of itself, as the body does.

This error is so widely connected with misapprehensions respecting the origin and nature of the religious life, that it cannot be fully developed without a wide discussion. But it is of less importance thoroughly to do this, than to exhibit the error itself. It has no doubt been fostered by the manner in which the axiom has been received, that all safe progress is gradual, that whatever is violent and sudden is unnatural and unsafe — an axiom true in itself, when rightly understood, but very falsely applied in the present instance. Is not the progress of the *day* gradual, it is asked; and the progress of the seasons imperceptible? Does not the seed germinate and spring forth without our being able to detect or trace it; growing night and day, we know not how; first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear? Are not all the beneficent operations of Provi-

dence and nature thus? — never rapid, vehement, instantaneous, but always gentle, quiet, gradual? And, satisfied with this analogy, we sit down to wait the advancement of our character, just as we wait the progress of the season; as if we had only to sit and wait; to do nothing to hasten or retard it; as if its course was onward as inevitably as fate. We do not perceive that we advance; but no matter: who sees the sun advance on the dial-plate? We have no consciousness of being in motion; but, then, who sees the motion of the planets, or the increase of the blade of corn? We are making no efforts: certainly not; for a growth, to be healthy, must not be forced. Who would have the sickly and short-lived produce of the hotbed?

But even if we chose to follow strictly the analogy between the insensible universe and the living moral soul, this mode of reasoning is unjustifiable. If we do not see the day come forward with our eyes, we perceive clearly, after an interval, that it has come forward; and though our keenest sight does not detect the growth of the plant, we yet do see that it has grown; and we should be extremely unhappy if the opening dawn should become stationary, or the grain and fruit should pause in the process of ripening. But those of whom I speak feel no uneasiness at the perception that their characters have become stationary; they are not troubled when, at the greatest intervals, they still find that they have gained nothing. All is made quiet in their conscience at once by the sovereign pacifier, "O, we are not to expect great results: improvement must be gradual; the more gradual, the more sure."

Has not this lamentable result been encouraged in many minds by the expression of a very eminent writer of great influence? — "that our Christian congregations contain two classes: to the one must be preached conversion, to the

other improvement" — an altogether just remark, which commends itself at once to every man's approbation. But how easily misapplied! Every one, on hearing it, bethinks himself, of which class is he? "I do not need conversion; I have been religiously educated; always attended church, always read my Bible, always accounted myself a Christian; I only need improvement. My case, then, is safe; I am on the right side, and of course it will be for my interest to improve; in fact, considering the advantages amidst which I live, I cannot fail to improve: 'tis not in the nature of man to live under such excellent preaching and with such facilities for reading and worship, and yet not improve." Thus perfectly satisfied with his situation and with himself, he folds his arms and does nothing. The current floats him along, and he does not dream that it can be to any other than the true haven.

If I should address such persons, I would ask them if they do not presume too much, when they thus take it for granted that they do not need conversion. Does it by any means follow, because they have been educated under Christian institutions, that they have availed themselves of them, and become Christians? Because they have been taught to read the Bible from their childhood, does it follow that the spirit of that holy book has formed their characters? Certainly this cannot be pretended. One may be brought up in the very recesses of the sanctuary, and yet be as corrupt as an abandoned heathen; may believe that Christianity is from heaven, as the Hindoo believes that his ancestral faith is divine, and be in heart addicted to all that is unchristian. History and observation tell of but too many who have contended for the faith, and yet who had checked no desire, controlled no passion, at its bidding. It is not, therefore, impossible that many decent men may have been brought

up amongst us to honor Christianity, who yet are far from being imbued with its spirit; that many may have a respect for its precepts and a jealous attachment to its forms, and yet be governed at heart by principles which it would disapprove. Doubtless there are many such: they are willing to count themselves its friends; they are proud to number themselves among its supporters; and, being thus Christians by birth, claim the right to be esteemed Christians indeed. But in order to be Christians indeed, they must be religious men; and religious men they are not: they need to be converted to the influence of the faith they honor; from the worldliness which governs them, to the personal experience of the power of the truth, which as yet is a dead letter to them. They think they need only to go on: alas! they have not yet begun. They have the very first step to take. They have the commencement to make.

Is it not to be feared that many are living and dying amongst us in this very condition? Is there not a quieting and deceptive influence in much of what passes for religious sentiment amongst us, producing the feeling that we have all begun — we have all entered the path of life — we have only to go on? But it is not true that all have begun. How, then, can it be otherwise than dangerous to entreat all to go on? How can they advance if they have not commenced? There can be no true and satisfactory progress unless we are sure that we have made a beginning, and a right beginning.

Now, the great error is, that men are content without any *proof* that they have made a beginning. They are willing to assume this important and all-essential fact as a thing of course.

They were born in a Christian land; they believe Christianity divine; they are pretty good men; they trust, through

God's mercy, they shall be saved. But this does not prove that they have in any proper sense commenced the Christian life. What are their ruling principles? On what rest their affections? Where are their motives, desires, and to what are their self-sacrifices offered? Get an honest reply to these questions, and you find that *the world* still rules them. A faith in things spiritual, and a supreme surrender to God, they as yet know not. *They have a beginning yet to make.*

I hold it to be clear that no man can have done so important a thing as to resolutely take up the Christian law for his guide, without a consciousness afterwards that he has at some time distinctly done so. It is a very momentous act in a man's life when he assumes the obligations and responsibilities of the word of Christ, and says, "For this Master I live and die." He must know that he has done it. It is not a thing to be taken for granted — to be supposed. The bearings of this faith on his daily life in a thousand ways — its applications to his temper, his thoughts, his will, his habits of living and speech — are too direct and palpable to leave any doubt on the subject. The struggle between this spirit of allegiance to conscience and faith, and the fleshly appetites and worldly principles; the trials, and falls, and recoveries, and shame, and joy, and all the various tumults of mind and heart, which the Christian pilgrimage implies, are all too distinct, too deeply felt, too strongly marked, to be forgotten, or to allow room for conjecture, supposition, or any testimony but the heart's own consciousness. Many, very many, have been so situated in early life, and have been so formed by influences exclusively of the world, that they can at no time come to a Christian life without most conspicuous and absolute change — a disruption of former ties, a more or less painful abandonment of former habits, a strange and entire alteration of the favorite and ruling de-

sires. Educated as most persons are, it is impossible that they should otherwise arrive at the Christian life; and this change is an era to be remembered. It leaves deep marks on the history. And as for others, who have been favored with a more propitious lot, and whose minds have received the sanctifying influence of truth from the cradle, drinking in divine knowledge with their daily discipline, and imbued with the temper of Heaven through the power of the society and teaching of their early guides, — they, too, cannot have confirmed their early impressions excepting through efforts and struggles; they must evidently *know*; it cannot be left to them to take for granted. They may have the most infallible proof that they have actually made a beginning.

But as for the great class of those who can produce neither of these proofs, how can they proceed? They are grossly self-deceived. Their trust and hope are altogether without foundation.

No wonder that they are content without progress. After assuming, without evidence, that they are Christians, it is a small thing to add the assumption that they move while they stand still.

Here, therefore, I propose to my readers, that they institute a solemn and thorough self-examination. Let each inquire and know whether he is one of this very extensive class, who thus easily imagine themselves to be something when they are nothing. If he has never yet doubted on the subject, nor rigorously inquired, he has reason for apprehension. Let him dwell no longer in uncertainty, or content himself with conjecture. Let him ascertain whether he has actually made a religious beginning. If not, let him waste no time in studying how to make *advancement*. He has an earlier and more important work — to remove away all the heavy rubbish which, through his self-deception and

long blindness, has been accumulating about him, and lay in earnest the foundation of a hearty faith, and a holy, heavenly character. If he is not sure that he has already begun the Christian life, let him begin now, to-day, with a prayerful determination, with a devoted purpose, with a heartfelt self-consecration to God, and Christ, and duty. Let him leave this great matter no longer in suspense, this most momentous question no longer open, but let him bring his real character and his hidden motives into the light — the clear light of truth — by taking devoutly and resolutely, the first grand step, by performing the initiatory act of intelligently, distinctly, and with a single heart, dedicating himself to the service of his heavenly Master.

CHAPTER III.

ERRORS NOTICED AND CORRECTED — ESPECIALLY THE ERROR OF THOSE WHO FANCY THAT THE CHRISTIAN LIFE MAY BE SUSTAINED WITHOUT THE USE OF MEANS.

I HAVE endeavored to expose the mistake of those who dream that the religious life has no beginning. I now turn to those who fancy that it may be sustained and supported without the use of means.

In stating their error thus, there is absurdity on its very face, so great that it may be supposed impossible for any one to maintain such a position. And perhaps to the full extent none will venture to maintain it in *terms*, though we certainly hear language which very nearly approaches the state-

ment I have made, and daily witness conduct which is consistent with no other principle than that which such a statement involves. In fact, it is the tendency of the speculations and the practice of the day to make light of forms, to undervalue modes of operation, to speak of times, persons, places, ceremonies, as unessential, material, instrumental, — as crutches for the lame, leading-strings for the weak, guides for babes, — quite necessary to those who are so far wedded to the body that it clogs and impedes their minds; but wholly unnecessary to the soul itself; in fact, as badges of an inferior condition, as marks of spiritual backwardness, as the remnants of an earthly dispensation, and relics of the infancy of our race, which are fast becoming unnecessary in this enlightened age, and which the truly enlightened had best dispense with at once.

There is a good deal of loose thinking and talking of this sort. It is founded on a misapprehension of the real nature of the advancement of man in the present world; as if cultivation and religion were making an actual change, not in his condition and advantages, but his very nature; relieving him of his dependence on the body, the senses, and the material world. Whereas, evidently, he must retain still his connection with them, his relation to them, and must be affected by them in his desires, appetites, habits, enjoyments, character — must act through them, and be acted on by them; and so long as this is so, it is perfectly impossible that he should be able to maintain a purely spiritual existence, or to advance his spiritual character without aid from abroad. While this connection with the outward world perpetually operates on him to affect his temper and distract his affections, it is necessary to counteract it by agents and contrivances which also operate outwardly. While, every day, appetite must be indulged at stated hours,

business done, and exciting thoughts, interests, and passions absorb his mind, he must every day have stated means of neutralizing their engrossing and infecting power, or they will obtain the mastery.

How it may be when the soul shall be separated from its present connection with the body, we do not know. Perhaps then it may go on a course of holy progress without external aid, or stated help; though the Scriptures give no representations which warrant us to decide peremptorily that it is so. Certainly it is not so now; and they who fancy it to be so, are taking the sure method to dwarf their own stature and chill their devout affections.

There is, undoubtedly, a distinction to be made between religion and the means of religion — a distinction, the want of attention to which has led to great abuses, and been the parent of fanaticism and superstition. Forms and ceremonies have been exaggerated into the essentials of faith; opinions have been made to take the place of character, and days and observances have usurped the respect which should have been paid to righteousness and true piety. In order to avoid this error of times past, it has become a favorite notion with many, that religion only, should have attention and honor — pure, unmixed, unaccompanied religion. They are to become religious; that is the great end; they are to form perfect characters. Religion does not consist in saying one's prayers, attending church, observing the Sabbath, sitting at the Lord's table, reading the Bible; these things are not religion. One may do all these, and yet not be religious — men have done all, scrupulously, and yet been reprobates. These are but the means; and if one be but a religious man at heart, it is of no consequence whether he scrupulously observe these means or not. Indeed, he had best avoid any approach to a

superstitious regard for them; it would belittle him; it is best to have a great deal of freedom. One should not be a slave to certain hours; he can pray at any time; a prayer is just as acceptable at the workbench, and in the street, as at the altar; and every day ought to be a Sabbath; one day has no more real sacredness than another. There is great danger of mistaking the means for the end; we will pursue the end only.

Common as something like this may be in the thoughts of many and the practice of more, it is yet wholly indefensible as a matter of reasoning, and utterly ruinous when applied to practice. Here and there a man may be found who can live on these principles uninjured; but they are extraordinary men; the great majority would infallibly be destroyed by them.

They lead to a disregard of religious services, which will extend, in too many instances, to a disregard of religion itself, and will often inevitably cause the Christian character to fall into decay, because the props which are necessary to support it are removed. So serious an evil deserves to be carefully considered. There can be little hope of general advancement or great attainment in religion, when such opinions are prevalent.

Let it be considered, therefore, that although, abstractly and strictly speaking, there may be an essential distinction between an end to be gained and the means by which it is to be gained, — for all practical purposes there is no difference whatever. If the result be desirable, and can be attained only through a certain process, that process is of precisely the same consequence as the result. If the affair be one of duty and obligation, the obligation to perform the process is as absolutely binding as the obligation to effect the result. If I desire to hold an eminent rank in society,

if I wish to be a promoter of human good in an important profession, it is just as important that I should pass through the discipline of that preparatory education which fits for the profession, as it is that I should enter on that profession. My usefulness and eminence depend equally upon both. It is not enough, in order to the arrival of a steamship at a distant city, that the crew be at their posts, the engineer at his wheel, and the machinery all in beautiful order; the boiler must be filled and the fire kindled; and he would be a stupid commander who should slight these because they are only means — who should say, that his object was to arrive at the city, and he was not to be busying himself about these little preliminaries to progress. Yet it would be hard to understand how there is any less stupidity in those who fancy themselves able to arrive at heaven, while they slight the appointed means of proceeding thither, as wholly secondary affairs. I ask, "Are you a student of the Scriptures? Do you daily and statedly pray? Are you fond of frequenting occasions of religious worship?" Your answer is, "O, no! religion does not consist in these things. I am only careful about the great end; that is all which I need to regard." That is to say, so long as you are resolved to arrive safely at the end of your journey, it is of no consequence whether the water, and the wood, and the fire, be applied to the boiler or not! "But," I add, "one would imagine that your own feelings would prompt you to join in these religious observances and acts — that your own religious state of mind and heart would lead you to take pleasure in them." "Why, yes, *sometimes*, now and then; and *then* it is well enough to attend and use them. But unless one happens to be *disposed* to engage in them, it is not worth while to do so. It is only the great end which I am anxious about." "And thus," I reply, "caring only for the *accom-*

plishment of your voyage, you have no rule but your *inclinations* to decide when you shall *feed the fire* which is to carry you on."

One would be glad to ask of the great men who have blessed the world with their light and action in any department of usefulness — especially one would like to ask of the apostles and reformers — how this doctrine would have operated in their case, and where the world would have been if they had been beguiled by it — if Paul, instead of his journeyings and toils that he might preach the gospel, and establish and organize churches, and so save men's souls and extend the kingdom of Christ in the world, had thought within himself, "Preaching, and worship, and the Christian community, are only the means of salvation; they are but secondary things in comparison with salvation: salvation, salvation, that is the great, prime, all-absorbing consideration; and why should I be wearing out my life on the mere means?" — or if Luther and the other men that have moved the world with their doctrine had sat silent, on the happy suggestion that *preaching is not religion* — RELIGION is the great thing to be regarded! And yet, where is the man who can show that it would have been more absurd in *them* thus to have forsaken the preaching of the gospel, and the gathering of assemblies, than it is in any private man to forsake the hearing of the word on the same pretence?

And yet there are men who practise and defend this unspeakable absurdity! They think themselves good Christians, and yet waste the hours of the Sabbath, are slack in their attendance on public worship, almost strangers to the Bible, without worship in their families, and without stated prayer in their closets; and, if you expostulate with them, very soberly reply, that these things do not constitute religion; they care only for religion itself. And thus there is not

one of the means appointed for and essential to religious establishment and growth which is not put by on this plea.

It is evident enough, I think, that these means, if not parts of religion, are yet essential to it. But I go still farther. I ask if it be so unquestionable, as appears to be taken for granted, that they are *not parts of religion.* Is it so clear that the reading of the Scriptures, acts of devotion, and attendance on the ordinances, are not essentially, and in their own nature, parts of religion as well as means? Let us look at this. What is religion? Strictly speaking, it is something invisible, intangible, immaterial, — which has no shape, and is not cognizable by any human sense. Practically speaking, it is a certain character — that state of mind, heart, and character, which become the relation in which a man stands to God. Now, I ask, what is that state of mind, heart, or character, without the expression of it? Is not the expression of it, properly speaking, a part of it? Can we say that there is character where there is no manifestation of it? If we were consulting philosophical exactness of terms, perhaps this might be disputed; but so far as regards real life and the common judgment of men, it is doubtless correct. We know nothing of real benevolence of heart, if in no way manifested — nothing of uprightness and strength of character — nothing of intellectual power — except so far as *expressed;* and this expression is always regarded as part of the character itself; it is the character acting.

Now, religion is a certain state of mind, heart, and character; but if there be no manifestation of this state in action, neither the individual himself nor other men could be assured of its existence and reality. But what are the expressions, what the manifestations, of religion? The most natural, perhaps the most spontaneous, the most indu-

bitable, is prayer. It is the *expression* of the religious heart to its God. It is the language of the devout mind. It is the action of the pious spirit. I cannot conceive, therefore, that any one should esteem prayer simply a *means* of religion. It is a part of religion. It is an inalienable concomitant. And it is represented, throughout the Scriptures, more frequently as an essential act of religion, — inseparable from and inherent in a devout character, — than as a means of increasing the devotional temper, or of spiritual improvement.

The same is true concerning the Christian ordinances. To express faith and newness of spirit by baptism, and to commune with the Savior at his table, are in themselves religious actions. To read the Scriptures, and devoutly meditate on the truth of God, and worship in his house, and listen to the preaching of his word, are religious acts, expressions of a religious character, no less than means of increasing in Christian knowledge and holiness.

It is, therefore, far from true that, in neglecting religious observances, we merely postpone the means to the end. They constitute, in their very nature, parts of that which we seek to achieve. They are natural *expressions, manifestations*, of the religious character; and one can hardly be authorized in imagining himself to possess that character, if it do not thus display itself.

If it be still said that one may make his selection from these means, and use those which best suit his own case and satisfy his own want, it may be replied; Undoubtedly he may find greater edification in some than in others, and to such he may with peculiar interest apply. But he can hardly think himself at liberty to *slight any*, so long as all have been appointed by God, and are regarded as part of man's service to him; so long, too, as each of them is only

another mode of giving expression to that spirit which he professes to desire to cultivate, and which he ought to find pleasure in expressing.

If these things be so, every man's duty becomes plain, and he can live in neglect of it only at the hazard of a great absurdity, which casts his soul into fearful peril.

CHAPTER IV.

THE YOUNG CHRISTIAN PUT ON HIS GUARD AGAINST THE HINDERANCE TO PROGRESS WHICH ARISES FROM DISAPPOINTMENT RESPECTING THE ENJOYMENT OF A RELIGIOUS LIFE.

Among the hinderances against which the young Christian may need to be put on his guard, we may mention, next, that arising from false expectations respecting the enjoyment of a religious life. The opening views of a religious existence are like those of youth, bright with vague anticipations of the future, full of gay dreams, romantic and visionary expectations. It is the youth of the soul, excited, ardent, confident, and painting the future in colors too uniformly gorgeous to be true. Not that any extravagance of expectation can exceed the actual happiness which the Christian realizes in his established faith. Young Christians do not, for they cannot, expect too much; but they expect — as the Scripture says "they ask — *amiss*." They err as to the nature more than as to the degree of enjoyment. They look for it in excitement, in strong emotion, in

ecstasy, in rapture. They expect to be forever in the same glowing frame of bliss in which they are now, while the subject is all new and their feelings all fresh. The scales have just fallen from their eyes, the light has broken in upon their souls for the first time, and the scene that bursts upon their view is that of Elysium. They have no idea that familiarity can ever render it less beautiful, or dull in any degree the emotion with which they gaze upon it. But it is a universal and inexorable law of nature, that familiarity tames the passionateness with which any object is regarded. The excitement of feeling goes down. The exaltation and frenzy of the mind subside. The pleasure may continue, but the rapture ceases.

He, therefore, who proceeds to cultivate his religious nature under the expectation that it is to yield him a perpetual, sensible joy, is sure to be disappointed. It is not the nature of the mind to be capable of perpetual, unintermitted joy. In all cases in which the mind is wrought up to a high pitch of excitement, one of two consequences always results — either it becomes weary, and the interest of the subject is worn out by the intenseness of the action, — and this often happens in religion, where a most passionate devotion for a season ends in coldness, indifference, and worldliness, — or else, the excitement being modified and controlled by reason and principle, the mind settles down into a quiet, steadfast, gentle, and equable condition, without ecstasy, but full of content. And this, too, is what we see in daily examples of the judicious and confirmed believers.

Many are made greatly unhappy, and fall into grievous despondency, for want of duly considering this. They find erelong that their frame of mind sinks. Not only have they no rapture, but they perceive with horror that occasionally even a lethargy of feeling comes over them, as if they

had fairly exhausted the excitability of their mind. They read and pray with a calmness which frightens them — a calmness they in vain try to agitate; and whereas they were shortly before lifted to the third heavens with delight, they now stand unmoved, as if the very pulse of celestial life had stopped. The contrast appals them. They fancy themselves deserted of God and all goodness. They feel themselves abandoned and lost, and are ready to sink in consternation and despair. They had imagined, in their hours of exalted musing, that the love of the world was subdued; that the power of its fascination was gone; that its follies and lusts, its pride and pleasures, having been seen once in their true light, could never have charms for them again; and that the sinful feelings they had formerly excited could not be excited by them again. But, as they again move about in the actual scenes of the world, they find it far otherwise. The desires and appetites which they supposed to be dead, were only sleeping, and they suddenly wake. The passions and selfishness which they supposed subdued spring up vigorously, and would break their chains, and clamor for indulgence, as before, and, perhaps, in some unguarded moment, seize on their gratification. All this astonishes and alarms them. They were not prepared for it. It is wholly unexpected. They find themselves deceived. They know not how to meet it. They are miserable. Their life is wholly a different one from that which they proposed to themselves — a life of watching, self-denial, and anxiety, when they had been looking for nothing but peace and joy. They are disheartened, and perhaps abandon the path which promised them pleasantness and peace, but has yielded them weariness and pain.

It becomes important, therefore, that the beginner should understand the nature both of Christian duty and of Chris-

tian happiness, that he may count the cost before he begins, and not fail through false and unreasonable expectations.

Let him consider, then, that Christian duty is conformity to a law, and Christian happiness the result of that conformity. This law governs the affections, as well as the conduct; determines the whole state of mind and feeling, as well as of life; and it is only when mind and feeling are conformed to this law, that the man is in the way of Christian duty, — only then, therefore, that he is to expect happiness. And what happiness? That which belongs to the consciousness of having done duty; that which grows out of and appertains to the state of mind which is attained; — and that will be, of course, satisfaction, contentment, rather than ecstasy. The consciousness of being right, the assurance of the favor of God, — these, being abiding and habitual impressions on the mind, are likely to produce a calm peace, rather than a tumultuous delight.

Then it is to be considered, further, that religion operates on the human mind upon similar principles with other subjects, and follows the laws and constitution of human nature. If, then, in respect to the question before us, the analogy of the other affections shows the same result, we ought to be satisfied. And undoubtedly it is so. The religious affections are kindred to all the affections. That love which is the essence of religion is the same love which exhibits itself in the various relations of man, and is the source of the purest and strongest joys of earth, as it is to be of those of heaven. How intense and fervent the love of a mother for her child! What sacrifices will she make for it, what toils endure, and how readily does her heart flutter and her eye overflow! Yet there are times when that strong affection seems dead in her bosom, and we have often heard her say that it seemed to her as if she had no

feeling, as if she were an unnatural creature, from whom all natural affection had departed. Yet, meantime, unexcited as she is, she goes resolutely on, discharging her maternal duties, till some occasion calls forth again the floods of tenderness. She did not blame herself — we did not blame her — for that habitual tranquillity of feeling, for that temporary coldness; — far from it. The cares of a large family never could go on, if the parent were agitated always with the intense feeling toward all the children which is the real measure of her love for each; and we know that she gives as genuine proof of her affection where the work she does for them takes her thoughts away from them, when she forgets them for a season, because she is so busy for their good, as when she overwhelms them with caresses and tears.

So, too, the father of the household. He leaves them in the morning, is absorbed with the toilsome cares of his business, and may not be distinctly conscious of a thought or emotion going back to them during the day. Is it proved, then, that he does not love them? Time was, when the image of her who is now the mother of his children haunted him like a dream, mingled with all his thoughts, could not be, would not be, banished from his mind: it was like a light about him wherever he went, and a bliss in his thoughts however he was employed; and thus his love was one perpetual living rapture. Because it is so no longer, does he therefore love her the less? Nay, he loves her the more, — with a sober, steadfast, habitual confidence and affection, which has lost its passion, but has become an essential portion of his being, — intrudes on him less, but in its calmness and quietness blesses him more. It is only the idle dream of romance which expects the rapture of the lover to be perpetuated in the sober certainty of waking bliss which makes the happiness of home. — And so of all the affections.

The religious affections go by the same law. When newly awakened and fixed on the great realities of God and eternity, they engross, and agitate, and absorb the soul; there is no room for any other thought, affection, or care; these fill and consume the whole being. But by-and-by the heart settles into a state of tranquillity; and the man, occupied in obedience and duty, is excited less, and walks with his faith as an old and familiar friend.

Let it, then, be no discouragement to the religious aspirant that familiarity with his new life has abstracted something from the keen relish it had at first. Let him learn to find an equal satisfaction in the moderate and unexciting life of tranquil duty, that he at first found in the strong emotions of the mind. Acceptance with God depends on the heart being right with him; and as you do not judge of the rightness of your child's affection toward yourself and the other children by its vehemence of expression, by its being easily called out in tears and vented in outcries, but rather by its steady and unobtrusive watchfulness for your wishes, and carefulness not to offend, and fidelity, and kindness, — so believe that the great Father judges of you, and approves you none the less because the strength of emotion with which you first came to him has subsided into an equable confidence and uniform obedience.

And here I cannot refrain from saying a few words in relation to another source of discouragement, which often operates in connection with that, to the consideration of which this chapter is especially devoted.

The Christian is very frequently disheartened, not only at finding less excitement and rapturous enjoyment in the religious life than he expected, but also at not discovering such obvious marks of progress in the advancing stages as at the commencement. But it is a very important truth for

him who is going forward in the Christian life to remember, that the growth of character follows, in many respects, the analogy of all other growth. In its beginnings it is more perceptible; its progress in its first stages is more striking: an extraordinary difference is in a very short time noticed, after a man has positively changed from worldliness to religion. But the succeeding steps become by-and-by less perceptible; and though actual, perhaps equal progress may be made in a more advanced state of the Christian course, yet the work may seem to be almost stationary. An illustration of this may be found in the different appearances of motion in the rising and the meridian sun; the former seeming to advance with rapidity, the latter hardly to move. Or take, for comparison, a work of art, a painting. The artist takes a blank and unmeaning canvass. He sketches the outlines of his beautiful subject. A very short time suffices to exhibit great progress. The whole form and features come rapidly into view. But as he approaches towards the finishing of his work, he labors the more delicate parts, he retouches, refines, perfects; but it all makes little show: in truth, there may be more and more careful study, and anxious toil, and the highest efforts of his genius, and yet the amount of labor and thought, and the degree of improvement, be perceptible to none but a most observing and practised eye. So it is with the Christian character the nearer it approaches to perfection: there may be great watchfulness, laborious self-discipline, toil for advancement, and a perpetual addition of those delicate strokes, those hues and shades of spiritual beauty by which perfection is attained; but no change shows itself, meanwhile, to the common observer; the Christian seems to others precisely where he was a month ago, and he himself

may be dissatisfied at not perceiving any obvious marks of growth corresponding with his arduous labors.

Let the Christian, then, not be deceived. Let him be sure that he judges himself by a right standard. It is true that he ought not to be too easily satisfied of his improvement; but neither ought he to be discouraged through an irrational regard and judgment of his moral condition. When the oak was just springing from the ground, and rearing its stem in the increase of its first tender season, its growth of but twelve inches above the soil, whereon nothing but decayed leaves was manifest before, appeared conspicuous and considerable; but now that it has waved its branches in the sunshine and winds of threescore summers, and sheltered two generations of men with its beneficent shadow, and nurtured innumerable tribes of living creatures in its kindly arms, it may add the same measure of increase in a year to each of its hundred gigantic limbs, with no perceptible enlargement; its real growth has been a hundred-fold what it was when most conspicuous to men, but no one observes or appreciates it. So it is with the Christian character: the more advanced its stages, the nearer it attains to perfection, its actual improvement, though greater than in the beginning, may nevertheless be less perceptible.

In view of the discouragements alluded to in this chapter, and of all others that might be enumerated, I would say to him who has really entered on a religious life, "You have taken the only rational course, the only safe course, the only truly happy course: persevere unto the end; run with patience the race that is set before you; fight the good fight, keep the faith, lay hold on eternal life. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."

CHAPTER V.

CONSIDERATIONS DESIGNED TO ASSIST THE CHRISTIAN IN THE SUCCESSFUL USE OF THE MEANS AND METHODS OF RELIGIOUS PROGRESS.

In order to the successful use of the means of religious progress, so that they shall truly operate to a religious growth, it is essential so to employ them as to create an equal, healthy development of the character in all its parts, so as to avoid the inconsistency and distortion which are the consequence of too exclusive devotion to some, and the comparative neglect of others. A perfectly well proportioned religious character is rarely to be found; but for that very reason it should be the more anxiously desired.

Character is constituted of the state of the mind and affections, and the habits of life. These ought all to be in harmony with each other, — directed by the same principles, exhibiting the same features, wearing the same complexion. If they disagree, there is a painful discordance perceived; something is wrong; there is neglect of duty, blame somewhere.

Now, the means of cultivating and perfecting the right state of mind and affections are, primarily, meditation and prayer, and those mental exercises of contemplation, self-examination and study, by which the soul is directly wrought upon and raised to a spiritual fervor. Thus it approaches to God, cherishes holy and benevolent desires, and comes to love and enjoy the things that are unseen and eternal. And when, from the seasons of contemplation and thought, the man goes into the scenes of active life, he

carries with him this propensity to goodness, these desires to do well. He goes with a mind imbued with the sentiment of devotion, and the spirit of dutifulness.

Thus far, well. But the character is not yet complete: the habits of his active life make part of it. And what are they? Do they correspond with this internal frame? Are they in harmony with these principles and sentiments?

We are ready at first to ask, "How can they be otherwise?" But we are soon reminded that it is often even so. It is common to witness lamentable inconsistencies between the feelings and the conduct. Some men appear to live two lives. They seem to have two souls. In private thought and in familiar converse they are devout men. Their sensibilities are quick; their emotions are strong; their sense of God lively; and they greatly enjoy their seasons of devotion and reading. But in the routine of life they are worldly, grasping, self-indulgent, devoted to gain, neglectful of trusts and duties, and far inferior to many who have no religious sensibility, who find little enjoyment in retirement and reflection, but who have accustomed themselves to the most scrupulous fidelity in every passing hour of social life.

It is to be with you, therefore, a matter of study and effort to carry the sentiment of the closet into action. The life of contemplation must not contradict the life of action. It is but partially that character is formed which is formed only by thinking, musing, and purposing. It wants the completeness of active habits. It wants the test which is to be found only in life. It wants the principle of growth which can be found only in action. And this is what is particularly to be considered in this connection — *action is an essential and all-important means of religious growth;* so much so, that even the contemplative graces, the virtues of the mind, true affection, exalted principle, benevolent dis-

positions, — which we are ready to believe thrive best in solitude; to cultivate which, multitudes have shut themselves out from the world, that they might have nothing to do but to meditate, read, and pray, — even these fail of their true perfection unless quickened and ripened by action. For consider a moment. When the mind is thus excited and glowing with divine truth and virtuous thoughts, is it not all so much impulse to do something? Does not the desire spring up spontaneously, prompting to act, — that is, to express itself? But there is no opportunity to act, and the impulse is denied. It is excited again, and again denied. What is the consequence? It is enfeebled. It becomes less and less strong. It fades and dies from the soul. Generous impulses, not acted upon, perish; the soul loses its sensibility, becomes callous. It has long been a familiar accusation against a certain sort of sentimental reading, that it tends to consume and waste the sympathies, and paralyze the affections, by highly exciting them, but allows them not expression in action, awakening the impulse, but refusing to gratify it. It is equally the case with all religious affections. And it is easy to understand how they who trust to them as if sufficient, and take no pains to carry them out in act, may come to exhibit two distinct characters — elevated thought and glowing feeling, but selfish indolence of life and cold inactivity.

Consider, therefore, that action is an essential means of religious growth. Follow out the highest impulses of your mind. Obey the suggestions of your conscience. Never deny the religious promptings of your feelings. Then you will establish the dominion of principle, the supremacy of conscience. Then all good feelings, having received their natural and intended gratification, will be encouraged and strengthened, because they have had their legitimate exercise.

Remarks to the same purpose may be made respecting the relation which subsists between *principle and habit.* Habit is a thing of tremendous power: it is sometimes omnipotent in man; and it is of the greatest consequence that its energies be as much as possible, and as easily as possible, secured on the side of virtue. It may be the greatest helper or the greatest hinderance to improvement. It was intended to be the former; and yet to how many, through life, does it prove the latter? In how many men does virtue make toilsome growth, because clogged, thwarted, depressed, by unfortunate habits! — habits formed in early life, established in the flesh, rooted in the affections, woven into the daily routine of conduct, till they become a part of the very nature; and the poor wretch whom they enthral is bound down to a miserable insignificance of character, and yet is wholly unaware of their deleterious predominance. They are habits, for example, of luxurious living, of perpetual personal indulgence, of slothfulness, of mental inaction; they are around him like a heavy and deadening atmosphere, through which his spirit has to make its way upward, and by which its flight is perpetually retarded. It has always been so, and he does not know it, or, if he knows it, how difficult to enforce the remedy! But in most instances, he has no conception of the true nature of the evil which hinders him; is not, perhaps, even aware of his grievous want of alacrity and progress — like the perpetual invalid, who has borne about with him from time immemorial a seated disorder which enfeebles him, but has no violent symptoms, and who still engages in all the general duties of life, — without the vigor and delight that other men know, — but with all the vigor and delight that he ever knew, and therefore without any consciousness of the extent of his own deficiency; and who never can be conscious how

far he is below the vigor and spirits of other men, except by being delivered from his ailment and made like other men. So is it with him whose moral power is palsied by the unpropitious habits I have referred to: he never can know the degree in which they are an injury to him, until, having thrown them off, he sees how rapidly he rises without them.

There is the greatest reason, then, that one should strictly examine himself in this respect; that he may not be depressed forever by circumstances in his modes of life, of whose injurious influence he is ignorant, and which he might counteract if he knew them.

But could he counteract them? It will not do to answer, No; and yet the difficulty is in many cases so all but insuperable, that we are ready to understand in its literal sense the words of the prophet, and believe that the undertaking is as desperately hopeless as that of changing the leopard's spots, and the Ethiopian's skin. To take the most familiar example: there is the drunkard. He continues such against his own will, in spite of his own resolutions, in contradiction to his own interest, tears, professions, purposes, principles. His bad habit is but the type of all bad habits; a little more desperate, perhaps, because it has worked itself into every fibre of the body, and made its gratification to be clamored for by every organ and function, every muscle, sense, and nerve; but all bad habits, in their place, exercise the same insane dominion. Sloth — is not the man ashamed of it? does he not make vows against it? does he not mourn at the ruin and disgrace it entails upon him? and yet he is slothful still. Ill-temper — does not the passionate mother, whose bursts of anger lead her to ill-treat the child that she loves, blush at her own shame, and condemn herself with bitterness and tears? and yet to-morrow the passion is her master again. Procrastination —

with what keen anguish, with what abiding sense of degradation, with what remorse for friends neglected, duties omitted, precious opportunities of usefulness passed by, and occasions of honor and improvement lost forever, — with what compunction and self-condemnation, with what torment of unintermitting self-dissatisfaction, — does that inexplicable habit pursue its poor deluded victim! And yet remorse and shame, and a thousand injurious results, and the appeal even of sober principle, are vain. He still submits to his master, and will be wiser *to-morrow*. Other instances any one can add. And they suggest the fearful question, which almost staggers our hope as we reply to it — whether, in sober truth, a confirmed ill habit be not incurable, and whether virtue have any prospect of gaining in the conflict.

The best answer is found in the appeal to opposite facts. The worst habits in the most desperate cases, and under the most unpromising circumstances, have been corrected. The history of the Christian religion is filled with examples. It has shown its divine power in these triumphs, and proved, by the wonderful trophies of its grace, in the amazing conversions from sin which it has wrought, that however desperate may seem to be the struggle between principle and habit, yet the good is the stronger, and must prevail in the end, whenever it is faithfully and perseveringly supported.

But how much faith and what long perseverance it demands!

From these extreme cases, then, the Christian, who is seeking improvement, must take both a warning and encouragement — a *warning* that he examine his condition, and be fully acquainted with every circumstance in his modes of life which threatens this ruinous ascendency over his principle; and an *encouragement* that, if he detect

any which is interwoven with his whole being, so that to part with it is like parting with a right hand or right eye, he yet *is able to do it*, and to enjoy the happiness of deliverance.

He is especially to learn the great duty of seeing to it, from the first, that all his personal and social habits, his disposition of time, the order of his affairs, the customs of his daily life and business, be such as to facilitate his virtuous purposes, — such as to make devotion and religion easy to him, — such as to make holy thoughts and benevolent actions always in place, never incongruous, never irksome, because evidently *in the way* of other affairs. By this method, he should give to goodness the fairest chance of obtaining a complete ascendency over him. Principle, finding all the habits of life and mind congenial, would thrive, and strengthen, and assume the complete mastery.

To make this yet the more sure, let him take pains directly to aid and encourage his principle; not only by bringing it forward and making it active on great emergencies, but by allowing it, nay, calling on it, to exert itself constantly; giving it small tasks; cheering it by the pleasure of small triumphs; and, in a word, by making even those lesser offices of duty and kindness, — which other men do of course, and without thinking, — by making even them matters of principle, — turning them into thoughtful acts of religious obedience, doing them because they are consonant to faith, and are suitable to a spiritual and holy nature — whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, doing all to the glory of God, as to the Lord, and not to men. In this way, the full power of habit and all its noblest energies may be enlisted on the side of his improvement. Because principle, being often called into action, and being made the supreme deciding authority,

more frequently than any thing else, the habit of acting from principle will become stronger than any other habit; will overcome, suppress, exclude every hostile habit: the opposition between principle and habit, which once so palsied the purpose and neutralized the efforts of virtue, will have ceased; and the forces once antagonistic, having become united in the alliance of truth, having become in fact *one*, there can be no longer any serious impediment to the onward progress of the soul. ***Being made free from sin, ye will become servants to God, and have your fruit unto holiness.***

CHAPTER VI.

MAXIMS ON WHICH THE EXPECTATION OF RELIGIOUS PROGRESS IS TO BE BUILT.

Let us suppose that the low views and the erroneous principles on which the Christian life is too frequently made to proceed are set aside. We next go on to state the maxims on which the expectation of Christian progress must be built.

And, first of all, it is evident that ***there must be a beginning.*** There is no such thing as setting out in the midst. There is a first step in every journey; there is the commencement of life in every germ. The religious life of the soul can form no exception: it must have a first step, a commencement. Define it as you please, — let it be the act of the human reason alone, — let it be the moral character as exhibited in daily life, — let it have no authority or

guide but the individual judgment and will; still there must be a beginning somewhere, for the simple reason that the individual who exercises the judgment and will has a beginning; so that no one, by adopting a low idea of the nature of the religious life, can thereby escape the obligation to ascertain whether he have started on the true career, nor assume that he came into it as a matter of course when he came into the world. For into what did he then come? Into those very habits of decent living which, in his view, are the Christian life? Surely not. Those habits were formed at a time when he had power to form the opposite habits; when he had the opportunity to decide for himself which he would adopt; and when, from some motive or other, he did adopt the better rather than the worse. If he claims that these should satisfy his conscience, then he must be able to show that he adopted them of good intention, that he formed the purpose to possess and maintain this character. Either he formed the purpose, or he did not form it: if he never formed the purpose, but is what he is by pure accident, then, of course, he will not pretend to any more *virtue* than if, by a similar accident, he had become any other character; and, on the other hand, if he formed the purpose and pursued it by resolute forethought and plan, then he made a beginning. Therefore, nothing can be more absurd than the idea so commonly and unthinkingly held by men, that they are in the midst of their religious progress, when they never formed a distinct intention of pursuing it, and cannot prove that they ever laid an express plan in relation to it.

Now, if this be true in regard to that low idea of the Christian life just referred to, how much more is it true of that correct and elevated idea which rises beyond the decencies of external morals, to the spiritual purity of the

affections, companionship with Christ, and a universal holiness. This absolute and express devotion to things invisible and eternal, this perpetual and supreme reference to the spiritual, is not a state of mind which grows up spontaneously, which starts to being of itself, out of the incumbrances and occupations of this visible state; — it must be the result of effort, the effect of design. No man can have thus gained the mastery over the sensible present without having intended it and labored for it: he could not *do this* without fixing a mark on that era of his life; without being able to go back and say that *then* he made a beginning; not perhaps at such a day or hour, or even absolutely such a year; but certainly that at such a period of life he took a decided stand, and, by some process of mind more or less protracted, came to the express understanding with himself that he was bound by religious obligations.

This is the first element in the religious life — this settled purpose of soul, this distinct, acknowledged, cherished intention and plan to live for heaven. He that cannot convict himself of having deliberately formed such a purpose, who is not conscious of having meditated and acted upon such a plan, talks idly when he asserts that he is in the midst of a Christian course: He deceives himself. He wants the first element of the religious life.

Next to this purpose, religious progress demands *effort*. The purpose must not die in inaction; it must not, as, alas! is too frequently the case, waste itself in reverie and musing. That dreamy state of the mind, which loves to dwell in contemplation, — to sit with the eyes half closed and gaze on the visions of glory which the fancy brings before it, — to think of the admirable things that may be done, and the grand designs which it would be delightful to accomplish, — is an unprofitable state, and does little to advance the char-

acter. It is likely to enervate rather than to improve it. No purpose is of any value which does not ripen into action; and the ever-present purpose of Christian progress is nought, unless accompanied by ever-active effort.

Inaction is the death of all virtue, the palsy of the character. It accounts satisfactorily for the backwardness and meanness of Christian men in Christian attainments. One might almost fancy, from the sluggishness with which men hold their faith, that, in adopting the gospel as their hope and rule, they had simply placed themselves on board some convenient vessel sent for their deliverance, and now were quietly to float down the gentle stream to the great city of their rest; instead of which, all experience and all revelation teach them, that they are embarked on a wide and perilous ocean, where they must watch and toil, and where they can make no progress except they make effort.

Our infatuation on this point is dreadful. Nothing else comes without labor and perseverance. Learning, accomplishments, distinction, wealth, — they are all earned; and no man, who desires them, hesitates to pay for them the full price, enormous as it sometimes is, at which alone they can be possessed. But that greatest and highest attainment, a perfect human character, is to come of itself. The calm peace of self-government, — the holy luxury of heavenly-mindedness — the lofty and complacent dignity of spiritualized affections — the honor of being like God, and glory of entering with Jesus Christ into immortal purity and love, — this we expect to obtain by wishing: this vast acquisition, this unlimited and illimitable boon, we look at, we admire, we long for, we do not doubt we shall possess; and yet we make for it nothing like the effort which we make to get bread for our children and ornaments to our houses.

No wonder, then, that the Christian community improves so slowly. No wonder that exemplary patterns of Christian attainment are so rare. No wonder that, instead of seeing all around us those men of the beatitudes, those partakers of the divine nature, those illustrious imitators of God, of whom the New Testament speaks, and whom Christ meant to fashion as his peculiar people, we are compelled to mourn over inconsistency and frailty — compelled to hide a multitude of sins in our good men with the mantle of a wide charity — compelled to extenuate and apologize for our own and our brethren's faults, on the score of that human imperfection, which it is our shame that we have not long ago surmounted and repressed. No wonder that, in this laxness of exertion toward Christian perfection, the world still waits to comprehend the meaning of that description which speaks of a "royal priesthood," "sons of God," "perfect men in Christ Jesus." For where are they? Here and there one, just to satisfy us that the word of God describes no impossibility — just enough to cast unspeakable reproach and shame on the indolence of the backward multitude of believers, — backward, because they make no true effort to go forward.

But it is not this listlessness and inaction alone, to which we are to look as the cause of this imperfect measure of Christian attainment amongst us; — much is to be imputed also to *a certain vagueness in respect to the nature and order of Christian progress.* Men do not distinctly perceive what it is, nor how it should proceed. The same inaccurate and cloudy notions already adverted to, which persuade them that they are in the successful prosecution of a work they have never expressly begun, nor formed any express purpose of doing, lead them also to believe that it will be, by-and-by, successfully completed in some general way; but they have not described to themselves in what way it is to

be — they indistinctly see they must go forward, but they have no clear, accurate idea of the path, and no idea whatever of the stages by which they are to proceed. In a word, their notion of the whole subject is general and confused, amounting to nothing more than that they are to be improving themselves and advancing toward heaven; that they are to grow better as they grow older;— but as to analyzing this idea, and reaching an actual understanding of the several points in regard to which they are to grow better, — this is foreign from their thought; and no wonder that this vagueness of purpose keeps them stationary.

The next point, therefore, to be considered is, that *religious progress is to be made by stages.* It is not merely proceeding, but proceeding from one point to another. It is not merely becoming better, but becoming better first in one respect and then in another.

All progress is from stage to stage. In the processes of nature it is so; — first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear; — a continued growth, but arriving at and passing certain *epochs* or *periods* as it proceeds. So in the growth of the human frame, and of the human mind; so in the advancement of society and knowledge. No science can be taught, no art can be learned, except in passing from step to step; one portion must be acquired first as a preparation for another, and the third can be reached only through the full comprehension of the second. Why should religious knowledge and Christian character be exceptions? Why should we not expect in their pursuit also to find natural steps of advancement, which invite us to aim at one attainment in the first place, and to make that a stepping-stone for the next? And if our religious progress were divided out for us into portions, would not its accomplishment be more certain and more satisfactory?

It may not be easy — indeed, it is very difficult — to state distinctly and with philosophical exactness the successive stages of the religious progress; and for this reason, among others, that they cannot be precisely the same to all men. Even the author of that celebrated description of the Christian life which depicts the Pilgrim's progress, though of a class of believers who have gone as far as any in making Christian experience of the same undeviating type in all individuals — has yet found it necessary to allow great varieties in the several histories which he framed. Greater varieties still will be allowed by most persons who consider carefully the infinite diversities which exist in the natural tempers and dispositions of men, and the circumstances of education, society, business, companions, forms of life, &c. in which men are placed. It is inevitable that, under this state of things, no minute account can be given of the stages of Christian progress which will precisely apply to all persons. We can state nothing more than a few general principles, of whose varying application every man must judge for himself.

Thus we may say, first, this culture of character which you have undertaken is a vast and complicated thing: it is not one thing, but many; and it demands equal watchfulness and effort in many directions, as to the thoughts, the passions, the words, the actions. It demands right affections toward all objects that concern you in this world, and in the invisible world; the proper balance of the affections; the due adjustment of the habits with the principle; the true combination of freedom and restraint, of contemplation with action, of firmness with gentleness. It demands knowledge, self-restraint, watchfulness, and action, in so many directions, on so many subjects, and so unintermittingly, that to undertake the whole at once, to assume the equal charge

of all, and attempt their faithful regulation at the same moment, is a task that might well seem desperate. The work must be divided and classified; the field must be separated into portions; special attention must be first bestowed on this, and then on that, and the huge labor be facilitated by partition, the long journey accomplished by stages.

Then, secondly, as respects the precise order in which the several objects shall be taken up and accomplished, it is clear that the first care should be to establish the dominion of some great leading principle in the soul, some one master authority, to whose pervading influence all shall submit, and from whose absolute word there shall be no appeal. This will be to lay the foundation of the character steadfast and strong, and to further and facilitate the unity and compactness of the whole structure. And the Creator has provided for this in the very constitution he has framed, by making conscience the supreme power, and ordaining that every faculty and disposition shall bow to its sway. *To assure to conscience its rightful sovereignty* is, therefore, the first object; to this one great end the attention should be directed and the chief effort made, because, until conscience sits monarch in the soul, all effort after permanent moral advancement must be vain; and afterward none can be lost; and in the mean time, while this is going on, much discipline of the heart and the life will be unconsciously accomplished which otherwise might demand serious labor. Let the vigor of the soul, then, be concentrated to the accomplishment of this result, rather than dissipated and enfeebled in the attempt to perform several acts of inferior moment.

Having made some progress in this great work, there is another distinct object which may in the same way command the special attention of the soul, and be made mat-

ter of studious and almost exclusive consideration — the *predominant affection*, namely. This is of not inferior consequence to that just mentioned. That to which the heart is devoted decides the character; and if the character is matter of solicitude, especially is it matter of solicitude to decide what shall be mistress of the heart. Here the case is plain. LOVE is the first and second thing; love is the fulfilling of the law; he that dwells in love dwells in God. This is the principle that must sway the affections: when it does, the law will be fulfilled, and the soul will dwell with God, without any minute and painful toiling after the petty details of duty. Let this, then, be a distinct study, — the separate and express aim, — until the characteristics of divine love are impressed deeply on the heart, and all meaner affections recognize and bow to its dominion.

Another distinct object must be, to gain *an ever-wakeful consciousness of the divine presence.* The good child must learn to feel the Father's presence, must never lose sight of his eye; and it is essential to spiritual growth that the spirit human should be always aware of its contact with the Spirit divine. This is to be learned. This must become a habit. And it can only be by making it a subject of distinct study and effort; so that the soul, which the officious senses would restrict to this visible scene of things, may be able to struggle away from them, and look alway at the things which are unseen and eternal.

Let these suffice for specimens of what is intended by stages in the religious progress. I trust I have said enough to exhibit my meaning clearly. The doctrine I would inculcate is, that, instead of proposing to ourselves, in general terms, the vast and vague purpose of becoming religious, we should parcel out our duty into its natural departments, and make each the object of separate discipline, until we

have become in some measure adepts in it, and then attend in the same way to another. Of course, this method cannot be pursued to the letter; no one can exclusively cultivate his conscience, and have no care of his affections; nor cherish the thought of God, and yet neglect his conscience. On the contrary, attention to either of these objects greatly tends to fix attention on the other two; but unquestionably the greatest proficiency in regard to each and to all would be achieved by an effort specially directed to one at a time.

This general principle might be illustrated and explained to a much greater extent; but enough has been said to render it intelligible, and show its application. One thing at a time, though a rule impossible to be literally adhered to, is yet, as far as it may be observed, as wise in the progress of the religious character as in any other important affair.

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